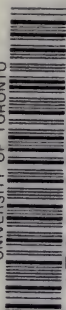
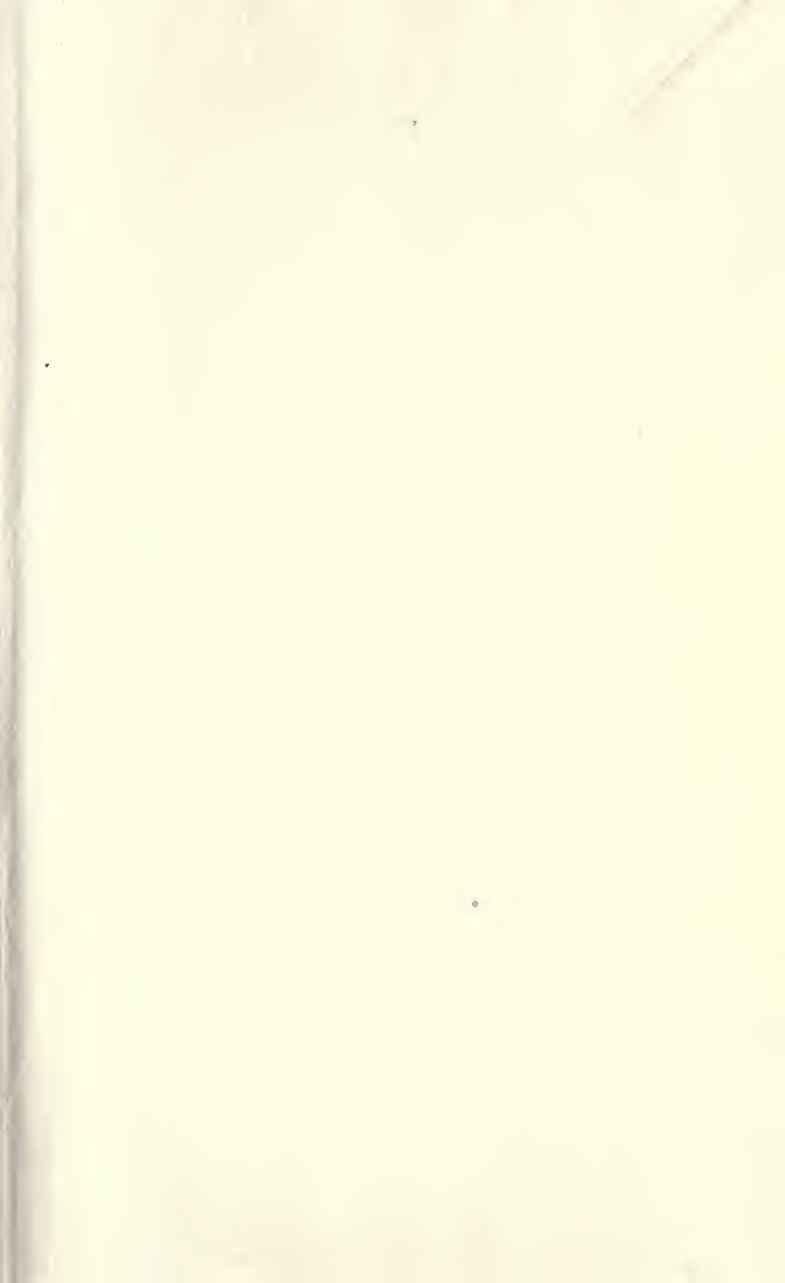


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JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

THE
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OF

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES

BY
JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES

BY

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES

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DRAMATIC WORKS

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IS RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

TO HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE DUCHESS OF KENT,

BY

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS'S MUCH INDEBTED AND MOST OBEDIENT

HUMBLE SERVANT,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

LONDON
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INTRODUCTION.

IN a former Introduction, it has been erroneously stated, that, like Burns, Mr. KNOWLES was an uneducated man. In his youth he had read several of the Latin prose and poetic classics, only occasionally assisted by some friend or acquaintance. It is true, that with the classics of his own country he was little acquainted, as, from the moment that he became ambitious of authorship, he designedly abstained from reading them, lest he should be guilty of plagiarism. His intimacy with certain of our dramatists may be dated from the period when he became connected with the stage, as an actor. His turn for dramatic composition was first developed on the occasion of his taking a part in some juvenile private theatricals.

Previously to this he had written numerous little pieces in rhyme; when it was his good fortune to be noticed by the late William Hazlitt, who was, then a young man, his senior by several years. This great critic and essayist, instead of sneering at the crude attempts of the would-be poet, encouraged them—kindly applauding what pleased him, and, as kindly, correcting what was faulty; while he would condescend to quote for his pupil, choice passages from established writers, and would point out to him the characteristics of their excellence. Thus, where there existed a total disparity in point of attainments, and a considerable one in point of years, a bond of love was formed between the man and the boy—a bond which tightened with the advance of life, and which, on the part of the former, was only loosened by death; while on that of the latter, it binds him still, in his old age, to the memory of his benefactor.

With Shakspeare Mr. Knowles became, first, acquainted through the few extracts with which “Enfield’s Speaker” was interspersed; this occurred at a very early age. In those extracts he intensely delighted. Child as he was, he felt their truthfulness. The selections from Otway, Rowe, and other

dramatists made little or no impression upon him; but "All the world's a stage," "Now my comates and brothers in exile," "To-day my Lord of Amiens and myself," "A fool! a fool! I met a fool in the forest," even "To be or not to be," and "Reason thus with life," with other extracts from the Bard, sank deep into his heart—so deep as never to be dislodged. Whatsoever there may be of truthfulness or of nature in Mr. Knowles's dramas, he ascribes to those very early impressions, coeval with his first advances in reading, and the practice of committing to memory.

Notwithstanding, it must be confessed that he was an incorrigible dunce: rarely, indeed, at the head of his little class, almost continually at the bottom of it. Discipline would have made a change, but he was an only son, and a pet, and the rod, however well deserved, was spared.

His father was a consummate English scholar and teacher—a nephew and pupil of Thomas Sheridan; the sire of the prodigally generous Richard Brinsley, who nobly succoured our dramatist's parents and their children, during a sudden and severe reverse of fortune, arising from persecution, through political prejudice. An editor in Cork—a Dr. Driscoll—had been prosecuted for a libel upon the venal government of the time, condemned, and sentenced to imprisonment; and arm in arm with him, as he was conducted by a guard of soldiers to the place of incarceration through the assize-thronged city walked his friend the elder Knowles. He had kept a boarding and day school: it was crowded the week before—in a week it was empty.

The mother of Sheridan Knowles was a woman of quick perception, of the most lively sensibility, and correct and steadfast principle. She was the daughter of a man of eminent piety and corresponding practice, respecting whom it was a common saying, that "if ever there was an angel upon earth Andrew Peace was one."

CONTENTS.

PART I.

CAIUS GRACCHUS	Page 1
VIRGINIUS	59
WILLIAM TELL.....	113
ALFRED THE GREAT; OR, THE PATRIOT KING....	177
THE HUNCHBACK	231
THE WIFE: A TALE OF MANTUA	291
THE BEGGAR OF BETHNAL GREEN.....	345
THE DAUGHTER	357

PART II.

THE LOVE CHASE	1
WOMAN'S WIT; OR, LOVE'S DISGUISES.....	53
THE MAID OF MARIENDORPT.....	113
LOVE	169
JOHN OF PROCIDA; OR, THE BRIDALS OF MESSINA	227
OLD MAIDS	285
THE ROSE OF ARRAGON	349
THE SECRETARY	405

CONTENTS

PART I

THE FIRST BOOK	1
THE SECOND BOOK	15
THE THIRD BOOK	31
THE FOURTH BOOK	47
THE FIFTH BOOK	63
THE SIXTH BOOK	79
THE SEVENTH BOOK	95
THE EIGHTH BOOK	111
THE NINTH BOOK	127
THE TENTH BOOK	143

PART II

THE ELEVENTH BOOK	159
THE TWELFTH BOOK	175
THE THIRTEENTH BOOK	191
THE FOURTEENTH BOOK	207
THE FIFTEENTH BOOK	223
THE SIXTEENTH BOOK	239
THE SEVENTEENTH BOOK	255
THE EIGHTEENTH BOOK	271
THE NINETEENTH BOOK	287
THE TWENTIETH BOOK	303

CAIUS GRACCHUS:

A Tragedy.

TO JOHN PATTERSON, ESQ.,

BRIDGE STREET, BLACKFRIARS.

MY DEAR SIR,

At your suggestion I wrote this Tragedy, and to you
I dedicate it.

With best wishes for your happiness, and that of your
family,

I am, my dear Sir,

Your obliged and faithful Friend and Servant,

J. S. KNOWLES.

GLASGOW,
November, 1823.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT DRURY LANE IN 1824.)

<i>Flaminius</i>	} Consuls	{	Mr. THOMPSON.
<i>Opimius</i>			Mr. ARCHER.
<i>Fannius</i>	} Patricians	{	Mr. POWELL.
<i>Tuditanus</i>			Mr. WEBSTER.
<i>Caius Gracchus</i> ..	} Tribunes.....	{	Mr. MACREADY.
<i>Drusus</i>			Mr. POPE.
<i>Licinius</i>	} Friends of Caius	{	Mr. PENLEY.
<i>Pomponius</i>			Mr. MERCER.
<i>Vettius</i>			Mr. YOUNGE.
<i>Fulvius Flaccus</i>			Mr. YARNOLD.
<i>Titus</i>	} Plebeians	{	Mr. TERRY.
<i>Probus</i>			Mr. W. WILLIAMS.
<i>Marcus</i>			Mr. GATTIE.
<i>Sextus</i>	} Servants to the	{	Mr. FITZWILLIAM.
<i>Quintus</i>			Mr. HUGHES.
<i>Lucius</i>	{ Page to Caius	}	Miss CARR.
<i>Cornelia</i>	{ Mother of Caius	}	Mrs. BUNN.
<i>Licinia</i>	{ Wife of Caius	}	Mrs. W. WEST.
<i>Livia</i>	Friend of Licinia		Miss SMITHSON.
<i>Lucilla</i>	An Attendant.		

Priests, Lictors, Soldiers, Citizens, &c.

CAIUS GRACCHUS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Rome—six Citizens discovered.*

Enter MARCUS and TITUS, *looking occasionally back, as if observing something passing behind them.*

Mar. Who is that next him in mourning?

Tit. His nephew; the rest are common friends.

Poor Vettius! no one will plead for him.

Mar. Peace! they are coming on.

Enter VETTIUS and his four Friends, *in mourning, followed by*
PROBUS and twelve other Citizens.

Vet. Weep not, my friends, for me; for Rome—for Rome
Reserve your tears. Her pride is turn'd to shame;
Her wealth to poverty; her strength to weakness;
Her fair report into a blasted name;
Her freedom into thralldom. Who would thrive
In Rome, let him forget what honour is,
Truth, reverence for the gods, respect for man!
Ay, gaze, ye poor, despised sons of Rome!
That crouch to your own power, by men more strong,
Only because more daring, wrenched from you!
Ay, gaze; and see your lovers, one by one,
Cut off; and never curse, unless it be
Your own hands, that you dare not stretch to save them!

[VETTIUS and his Friends go out.]

Tit. Masters, we are in a sorrowful plight indeed, when
such a friend as Vettius spurns us.

Mar. See! who is that he stops to speak to?

Tit. Know you not? Why, you've seen him as often as
you've seen your own hand. 'Tis the senator Fannius—that
Fannius, that looks so sweetly on the people, and, for all that,
never yet did them a good turn.

Mar. Oh! is it he?

Tit. To be sure it is! See how he leans to Vettius, and
seems to pity him. I warrant you there's a tear in his eye
now, although his heart would laugh to tell you how it came
there. See, he puts his hand upon his breast; that's an appeal
to his honesty, which is always sure to be out of the way,

whenever any one else happens to call upon it. Oh, he's a proper patrician!

Mar. Think you they will condemn Vettius?

Tit. Think you he is a friend to the people?

Mar. Who doubts that he is?

Tit. Who doubts, then, they will condemn him?

Mar. See! Fannius quits him.

Tit. And he's as much his friend as ever he was. His absence will profit him just as much as his presence.—Yonder comes Licinius, the brother-in-law of Caius Gracchus. Who knows but Caius will speak for Vettius, who was his brother Tiberius's friend?

Mar. Not he! He never appears in the assemblies of the people.

Pro. No; he loves to keep house better. He is married, you know; and his wife is a fair woman. No wonder he prefers her company to ours.

Mar. Do they say he is a man of any parts?

Tit. Yes; he assisted his brother Tiberius once, when he was tribune; and he was thought to be of great promise. 'Tis said he is much given to study.

Mar. 'Twould seem so, indeed; and that he had not yet found out it was the patricians who murdered his brother. I would have taken more revenge for a cur of mine that had been lamed, than Caius took for his brother that was murdered. What revenge did he take? None! He kept house, while the patricians buried his brother in the Tiber! Rome has nothing to hope from him.

Pro. Nay, that's certain. He'll never die for the people.

Mar. Die! No, nor live neither.

Tit. Silence! Licinius is here.

Enter LICINIUS and CAIUS GRACCHUS.

Lic. Health to you, master!

Mar. Health to Licinius!

Caius. [To LICINIUS.] The people look coldly on me.

Lic. Hang them! They show fine airs at their own handiwork; I'll speak to them.

Caius. Gently, I pray you; they are bare and hungry, houseless and friendless, and my heart bleeds for them.

Lic. What is the cause of your collecting?

Lit. We come to see Vettius condemned.

Lic. Why do you say condemned? The laws are to try him. He will have justice.

Mar. Ay, from the patricians!

Lic. What of the patricians? Are not the patricians just?

Mar. Not to the people.

Lic. Why not?

Mar. Because they have the power to be otherwise. They have as great dominion over the people, as over their oxen; and so they treat them like their oxen,—unhinder them, back them up, and feed upon them.

Lic. Are the people, then, no better than their oxen, that they endure all this?

Mar. What can the people do? They have no friends that will speak or act for them. The people can do nothing of themselves—they have no power. If the people could find friends—

Lic. Peace! peace! If you gain friends, you lose them straight.

Whoe'er would die for you, you let him die!
You shrug, you shiver, and you whine; but he
That pities you, has need, himself, of pity.
You make a big shout, and a frightful face;
But in your deeds are little to be feared.

Mar. Are you against us, too? You that were Tiberius's friend?

Lic. Who but his friend should be against you? You
That fell from him in danger, who to you
In danger clung? Who would not be against you?
Drowning, you make a cry; and when a hand
Is found to keep your head above the flood,
And bear you safe to land, at the first wave
That booms upon you—idiots in your fear!
You mar his skill, and sink him to the bottom!

Mar. Is that our way?

Lic. Ask you for friends, who to your friends are foes?
In presence, too, of Caius Gracchus, here,
Whose brother you gave up to death?

Mar. We gave!

Lic. Ye gave! When, in the exercise of your rights,
The nobles, with their herd of slaves and clients,
Drove you—a base herd to be so driven!—
With clubs and levers from the market-place,
What did you then? Like spectres, with your fear,
Livid and purged of substance, you glared on,
And saw Tiberius, mangled with their staves,
Into the Tiber thrown, as butchers cast
The offal to the tide.

Caius. No more, Licinius;

Pray you, no more; you are too stern with them.

Lic. Too stern! Would the patricians learn of me,
I'd teach them how to cater for the people.
They should not have a vote. If free-born men

Will crouch like slaves, why would you have them freemen?

Caius. It is his mood, friends; let him be; ne'er mind him.

[LICINIUS and CAIUS GRACCHUS go out.]

Mar. 'Tis plain Licinius is no friend of ours.

Tit. He says the truth. You suffered the patricians and their slaves to murder Tiberius.

Mar. If Licinius is so bitter against us, what must we expect from Caius?

Tit. Yet would he have stopped Licinius when he railed at us.
Who knows but Caius would befriend the people if he could?

Mar. Not he! He'd hang the people if he could.—Come, masters; to the Forum. Farewell, Tiberius! He would not see Vettius accused without defending him.—'Twill be long before we shall see such another friend as Tiberius!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*The Forum—the Tribunal, on which is the Curule Chair, six Lictors on each side—an Altar—a Rostrum.*

FLAMINIUS, OPIMIUS, TUDITANUS, FANNIUS, and Senators discovered.

Opi. How would you cure a state o'errun with evils,
But as you'd cleanse a garden rank with weeds?
Up with them by the roots! The slothful hand
That will not bend it to the needful work,
Mars its own ease, and profitless expends
The labour which it grudges. Why falls Tiberius,
If not his coadjutor? Vettius free,
Gracchus should have been free, and Rome a slave.

Fla. Know you what friend he trusts with his defence?

Tud. 'Tis rumour'd, but I say not with what truth,
That, hopeless of acquittal, he will plead
Guilty, and throw himself upon our mercy.

Opi. Our mercy, then, is mercy to ourselves;
In showing which, we dare not pardon him.
Caius, I trust, will not appear for him.

Fan. Not he; he shuns all care of public questions,
And seems to be a mild retiring man.
He is not of the temper of Tiberius;
Or, if he is, he does not emulate
His fate.

Opi. I would not have him speak for Vettius:
His voice would be omnipotent against us.

Fan. See, Vettius is at hand! Opimius,
You will conduct the prosecution.

[FLAMINIUS ascends the tribunal—the Patricians follow, and remain at the foot of the steps—OPIMIUS goes and ascends the rostrum.]

Enter VETTIVS with his Friends, followed by TITUS, MARCUS, and Citizens.

Opi. Vettius, stand forth!

Vet. [*Advancing.*] Behold, Opimius,
The sacrifice is ready!

Opi. The false man

Is his own sacrificer. Gentle Romans,
When shall we live as brothers? Is not Rome
Our common mother? Why should we, her sons,
Be foes? Ye powers that favour civil concord,
Prepare your vengeance, for the fratricide
Foments distrust among us.

Tit. Opimius pays the people court.

Mar. Yes, he rides us well. He strokes us when we do not need the spur. Oh, we are gentle beasts!

Opi. You, Spurius Vettius, I accuse of treason.
What answer you?

Vet. That, since the times decree
To innocence, what was in ancient days
The penalty of guilt, I am prepared
To suffer your award, and answer—guilty!

[*Goes under the rostrum.*]

Fla. And waive you all defence?

Vet. When knew you, consul,
A man, already cast, to make defence?
I seem at large, but well am I advised
My cause is tried, and final sentence pass'd.
If you would have me use a Roman's right,
Show me the Romans I shall claim it of.
Call you these Romans? Why, your very slaves
Put on a prouder port, and cower not thus
Before you!

Opi. Hear you his seditious speech?
But he convicts himself. Say, Romans, say,
What penalty do you adjudge the traitor?

Tud. Let it be death.

Tit. Nay, good Tuditanus, name some other punishment.
We will consent to banish him.

Opi. It is too mild a sentence. Let it be death!

Senators. Ay, death!

Fla. Come down, Opimius, help us to collect
The votes.

[*OPIMIUS descends from the rostrum, and goes down behind the Citizens.*]

Vet. O, Romans! he that is content
To live among you, prostrate as you are,
Should suffer worse than death!

Opi. Your votes!

CAIUS GRACCHUS *appears in the rostrum.*

Caius. Opimius, hold!

[*Upon hearing CAIUS GRACCHUS the people shout, press round the rostrum, and cry, "Caius! Caius Gracchus! Caius! Caius!"*]

Opi. How! Gracchus in the rostrum!

Caius. Hold, good Opimius, do not yet collect
The votes.

Tit. & Citizens. No! no!—No votes!

Mar. Speak, Caius Gracchus! speak!

Caius. I come to plead for Vettius.

Tit. Go on! go on!

Caius. The brother of Tiberius for the friend!

Mar. Noble Caius, go on!

Caius. I pray you, gentle friends, if I should make you

A poor, confused, disjointed, graceless speech,
 Let it not hurt the man for whom I plead.
 If I should falter—if my heart should rise
 Into my throat, and choke my utterance,
 Or if my eyes should with a torrent drown
 My struggling words, let it not, I beseech you,
 Let it not hurt the man for whom I plead!

Mar. Tiberius lives again! Tiberius speaks!

Caius. Tiberius lives again! Alas, my friends!
 Go ask the Tiber if he lives again;
 Cry for him to its waters; they do know
 Where your Tiberius lies, never to live
 Again. Their channel was his only grave,
 Where, still, they murmur o'er him; but, with all
 The restless chafing of their many waves,
 Cannot awake one throb in the big heart
 That wont to beat so strong, when struggling for
 Your liberties!

Tit. Noble Tiberius!

Mar. Noble Caius! See how he weeps for his brother!

Opi. Their hearts are his already. Our labour's lost.

Caius. What is't you do? Is it to banishment
 Or death, you are about to doom that man?
 Know you no heavier punishment for those
 That love you? Rather let them live, to hear
 You groan beneath the burdens of the great,
 And bear it!—To behold you vilely spurn'd
 By clients, bondsmen, hirelings, and bear it!
 To see you griped by heartless usury!
 To hear your children cry to you for food,
 Without a shelter for your wretched heads,
 Or land enough to serve you for a grave,
 And bear it! To a Roman, such as Vettius,
 What banishment, what death, were suffering
 Equal to life like this?

Tit. Most true! most true!

Mar. Vettius is a friend to the people, and therefore he is
 accused.

First Citizen. Ay, that's his crime.

Second Citizen. He's innocent.

Tit. & Mar. Vettius is innocent!

Opi. Have you done, Caius?

For, by your leave, I will produce my witnesses.

Vet. They are the creatures of thy tampering;
 Wretches that feed upon the victims of
 Thy cruelty.

Opi. Ho, there! My witnesses!

Mar. No witnesses! no witnesses!

Tit. Speak, Gracchus, speak!

We'll hear you, Gracchus, before a thousand witnesses.—
 Go on!

Citizens. Go on! go on!

Caius. Romans! I hold a copy of the charge,
 And depositions of the witnesses.
 Upon three several grounds he is arraign'd:
 First, that he strove to bring the magistracy
 Into contempt; next, that he form'd a plot,
 With certain slaves, to raise a tumult; last,—
 And were there here the slightest proof, myself
 Would bid him sheathe a dagger in his breast,—
 That he conspired with enemies of Rome—
 With foreigners, barbarians—to betray her!
 The first, I'll answer: Vettius is a Roman,
 And 'tis his privilege to speak his thoughts.
 The next, I'll answer: Vettius is a freeman,
 And never would make compact with a slave.
 The last, I'll answer: Vettius loves his country;
 And who that loves his country would betray her?
 But, say they, "We have witnesses against him."
 Name them! Who stands the first upon the list?
 A client! I'll oppose to him a senator.
 Who next? A slave! Set down a Roman knight!
 Who follows last? The servant of a questor!
 I'll place a tribune opposite to him!
 How stand we now? Which weighs the heavier?
 Their questor's servant, or my tribune?—Their
 Slave, or my Roman knight?—Their client, or
 My senator? Now, call your witnesses.

Mar. We'll have no witnesses!

Tit. For your sake, Caius, we acquit him.

Mar. Vettius is innocent.

Citizens. Ay! ay! ay!

Mar. The tribes acquit Vettius by acclamation.

Citizens. We do! we do!

Opi. Hear me, I say!

Citizens. No! no! no!

Caius. [*Descending from the rostrum.*] Their voices are against
 you, good Opimius!

Fla. To please the people, we withdraw our charge.

Citizens. Huzza! huzza!

Caius. Come, Vettius, come! my brother's friend is free!

Citizens. Huzza! huzza!

[CAIUS GRACCHUS, VETTIUS, and Citizens go out.]

Fla. This was their policy!—What's to be done?

Opi. Remove him from the city, and you nip
 The danger in the bud. I'll take him for
 My questor, if you'll name him to the office,
 And render good account of him. Who waits
 Until a reptile stings him, ere he crushes it?
 Tread on it at once!

Fla. Your counsel pleases me.

Here's the commission I designed for Carbo,
 All but the name, filled up. In Carbo's place,
 I'll insert Caius, and despatch it to him.

Opi. I leave Rome ere an hour.

Fla. He shall have orders

Most positive to bear you company.

Opi. Of your decision you shall reap the fruits,
Or, when you name your friends, leave out Opimius!

[*OPIMIUS and TUDITANUS go out, the scene closes on the rest.*]

SCENE III.—CAIUS GRACCHUS'S *House.*

Enter LIVIA and LICINIA.

Lici. I am the happiest wife in Rome, my Livia!
The happiest wife in Rome.

Livia. I doubt it not!

But there's Flaminius' wife, the other day,
Scarce from the Forum to her house could pass
For salutations, that her husband won
The consulate.

Lici. That day, my Caius sat
At home with me, and read to me, my Livia.
Little cared I who won the consulate!

Livia. And there's Lectorius has obtained a government;
His wife will be a queen!

Lici. Well, let her be so!
My queendom is, to be a simple wife.
This is my government, my husband's house,
Where, when he sits beside me, I'm enthroned.
Enough. You'll smile; but, Juno be my witness!
I'd rather see him, with his boy upon
His knee, than seated in the consul's chair,
With all the senate round him.

[*During this speech she pulls forward the table, &c.
and places her embroidery.*]

Livia. Yet his greatness
Must needs be thine.

Lici. I do not care for greatness:
It is a thing lives too much out of doors;
'Tis anywhere but at home; you will not find it
Once in a week, in its own house, at supper
With the family. Knock any hour you choose,
And ask for it; nine times in ten they'll send you
To the senate, or the Forum, or to such
Or such a one's, in quest of it! 'Tis a month
Since Caius took a meal from home, and that
Was with my brother. If he walks, I walk
Along with him, if I choose; or if I stay
Behind, it is a race 'twixt him and the time
He promised to be back again, which is first;
And when he's back, and the door shut on him,
Consume happy in my world within,
I never think of any world without.

Livia. Well, then, you are the happiest wife in Rome.

Lici. Tell me, and did Flaminius' wife weep, Livia,
That day when Rome did salutation to her?

Livia. Weep!—No. Why should she weep?

Lici. For happiness.

Do you see? I cannot talk of Caius, but
I weep, so happy am I! Here's Cornelia;
That stately step is hers. She loves me, Livia,
Though oft she chides me, that I'd have my Caius
Live for his wife alone.

Enter CORNELIA.

Cor. Good day, my Livia.

Now would I lose my head, could I not tell
What this fair thing, that calls me mother, has
Been talking of: if not her husband, then
For once hath the hundredth chance turn'd up, with all
The ninety-nine against it!

Lici. Well, a wife
May talk of her husband.

Cor. Did I not tell you so?

Well, well! I've just now come from thy young Caius;
We've almost quarrell'd; would you think it? Mind,
Licina, what I say. That boy's the making
Of a man that will not keep on humble terms
With Fortune, but walk up to her, and challenge her
To smile or frown her most.

Lici. It must content me,
His father is not such a one.

Cor. May be!

Lici. Ay, but I'm sure of it! [*Sits down to her embroidery.*]

Livia. Good day, Licinia!
Cornelia, health be with you!

Lici. Must you go?

You have not told me yet the morning's news.

Livia. Indeed I've heard none, save that Vettius,
They say, is to be banish'd, which no doubt
You know already.

Lici. Not a word of it.
What is the time of day?

Livia. 'Tis the third hour,
And past. Good day again.

[*Goes out.*]

Cor. Good day, my Livia!

Why, my Licinia, what's the matter with you?
You've suffered Livia to depart, without
Saying good-bye to her.

Lici. 'Tis past the time
Caius should have been back, almost an hour.

Cor. Well, what and if it is? Go on with your work,
And while the time away; the sooner he'll
Be with you.

[*Advancing towards her, and looking over her shoulder.*]

Why you've done that rose to the life.
 A musk-rose, is it not? 'Tis everything
 Except the scent, and that almost I think
 I can perceive with looking on't. Indeed,
 You are a skilful needle!

Lici. Do you think
 Caius hath aught to do with Vettius' trial?

Cor. Think what is passing on Olympus! One way
 Or the other, what concerns it us? Men have
 Their proper business, which no part it is
 Of ours to help to manage. Why, that thread's
 A crimson one you're taking to the leaf?

Lici. [*Rising.*] Cornelia! Mother! Know you anything
 About Caius? I'm sure you do. You praise
 My work when I discourse of him; when I question you
 Concerning him, your answer but puts off
 The proper one, which, were it good to have,
 Would you not give it me? I fear, I know
 Not what! Oh, tell me what have I to fear?
 Keep me not in the dark! A thing, we see not,
 Stirring will startle us, which, when light comes,
 We smile to find it nothing.

Cor. Take your seat,
 And I'll sit down by you; and listen to me.

Lici. I thank you now, Cornelia!

Cor. Thank me by-and-by;
 You should, but I doubt you will not. I know nothing
 Of Caius' measures.

Lici. Measures!—Hath he measures?

Cor. Hath he hands and feet?—Hath he brains and
 heart?—Is he

A man?—What do you take him for?—Have men
 No parts to play but lovers?—What! are they
 Not citizens as well?—Have they not crafts,
 Callings, professions? Women act their parts,
 Then, when they make their order'd houses know them.
 Men must be busy out of doors,—must stir
 The city,—yea, make the great world aware
 That they are in it; for the mastery
 Of which they race, and wrestle, and such feats
 Perform, the very skies, in wonderment,
 Echoing Earth's acclaim, applaud them, too!

Enter LICINIUS.

What want you with me, my Licinius? [*Rising and taking him
 aside.*] You

Have come to tell me something. Caius hath spoken
 For Vettius? I was sure he would! 'Tis done!
 He has enter'd the lists—he has stripp'd for the course! I know
 He will not get fair play, no more than his brother.
 These fears are not good omens, my Licinius!
 But let him run it nobly!

Lic. Nobly he
Has started! Vettius is acquitted.

Cor. So far

So well. Away! Hurry him home to us,—
The sooner here the better!

Lici. [*Rising.*] Stay, Licinius!

Cor. I'll tell you all, Licinia; let him go.

Caius hath spoken in the Forum for [*LICINIUS goes out.*]
His brother's friend, and they've acquitted him.

Lici. [*Bursting into tears.*] An hour ago I was the happiest wife
In Rome!

Cor. Licinia, if you are Caius' wife,
I am his mother. Is he not dear to me,—

My youngest son, and last? Yet do I bear

That which I know must come. I know my son:

Know thou thy husband—know our Caius Gracchus!

He loves his mother well—Licinia better,—

His country best! As I, his mother, grudge not

That he prefers thee, thou, his wife, repine not

That he prefers his country. Both of us

Make up our minds to whatsoever may follow.

Enter LUCIUS.

Luc. My master's coming, Cornelia, attended by a crowd
of citizens, who rend the air with shouts. They say he has
procured the acquittal of the noble Vettius. Rome is all joy
and exultation.

Cor. Run to the door, and wait upon thy master.

[*LUCIUS goes out.*]

Hear you, Licinia? Away with these sad looks;
Damp not your husband's triumph! Can you hear
The people's shouts, and not partake their joy?

Lici. I can remember, when Tiberius fell,

Not one of all of them had voice enough

To bid his murderers hold!

Cor. 'Tis well, Licinia!

Had he not fallen in a most generous cause,

I should have thought of that as well as you! [*Shouts without.*]

Enter CAIUS GRACCHUS, LUCIUS, and Attendants.

My son—my Caius! give you joy!—You've saved

The life of your brother's friend!

Caius. Licinia knows it?

Cor. She does; go to her.

Caius. She has more to learn.

Scarce had I left the Forum, when a message

From the consul follow'd, giving me the post

Of questor, and requiring me on the instant

To join Opimius.

[*LUCIUS and Attendants go out.*]

Cor. What! and must you leave us?

I did not look for this. At once, my Caius?

Well, son, I'm ready. Go, prepare thy wife.

Caius. What, my Licinia! don't you speak to Caius?

Lici. You never said a word of it to me!

Re-enter LICINIUS.

Lic. Come, Caius, are you ready?

Lici. Ready for what?

Caius. To take a ride, wife, and a long one, too.

Lic. The general waits.

Re-enter LUCIUS and Attendants, bearing CAIUS's helmet, sword, and cloak.

Lici. The general waits!—What general?
Where are you going, Caius?—Oh, ye gods!
What else do ye intend?—Tell me the worst!

Caius. Love, I'm appointed questor to Opimius;
And but a moment have for the farewells
'Twould take a day to speak! Do you trust your Caius?

Lici. Do I love thee!

Cor. Ay, Licinia, if you love him!
Wouldst have thy husband be the lowest man
In Rome? Thou knowest none may hope to gain
The honours of the state, who have not shown
Their prowess in the field. A Roman wife
Is married to her husband's glory, not
His ease and pleasure. Come, take leave of him.

Lici. I'll see you to your horse.

Cor. What, with that face?

Lici. Will you not see your boy before you go?

Caius. I saw him, Sweet, as I came in.

Lici. Well, Caius,
Farewell!

Caius. Now, that's my own Licinia!
I'll send you letters, love, day after day.
Now, that's my own brave girl, to smile! 'Tis like
A sunny morning to a traveller
At setting out, which fills him with fair omens.
Farewell!

Lici. I'll see you to the door.

Caius. So do.

Keep up your heart, love; I can come to you,
You know, at a day's warning!—Think of that.
Or you can come to me!—and you will write
Dear letters, won't you! every word of which
I'll kiss, and think I press the hand that traced them!
There now;—and, love, remember, as I shall,
Sad parting makes sweet meeting. Now, my Licinia!

[*They go out.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Rome.**Enter FANNIUS.*

Fan. The gods provide for him ! Fame talks of him,
 As of a theme she could emblazon the more
 The more she should dilate on't. Enemies
 Contend with friends which shall outdo the other
 In vaunting of him. Yea, the hands that hate him
 Supply him but with richest kindnesses ;
 The bane, they'd work him, turning into good.
 This questorship, for his undoing meant,
 Has built him up a thousand times the man
 He was before ; that scarce a day can pass,
 But something's added, to swell up the amount
 Of his o'erflowing fortunes.

Enter FLAMINIUS.

Fla. Health to Fannius !
 Opimius is arrived.

Fan. I am glad of it.

Fla. Something to temper joy,—would you believe it ?
 Gracchus is now in Rome, or soon to be.
 What think you ?

Fan. That, if he returns to Rome,
 Rome's at his feet.

Fla. Come to the senate. Something
 Must be resolved upon to hurt his credit,
 And slake the people's joy at seeing him.

Fan. Effect but that, thou art a god to Rome ! [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*Caius Gracchus' House.*

CORNELIA, LICINIA, and LICINIUS discovered—LICINIA
seated at a table.

Cor. Are not you pleased at this, Licinia !

Lici. No ;

Nor pleased, yet nor displeased, Cornelia.
 What care I that the world allows him good
 And wise ? Did I not know him so before ?
 Had I a doubt of it ?—Whom did I ask
 To give their oath of it ?—I was content
 With mine own knowledge. Why should I be glaw
 That all applaud him ?—For his sake ?—Alas !
 For any cause but that ! Whom all applaud,
 Let the tide change, though never change the man,
 All are as sure to blame ! I did not wed

Thy son as one would choose an idle gem,
To sparkle, for the praise of others' eyes,
But that he blazed in mine.

Cor. Go on, Licinius.

Lic. His very fame more profit brings to Rome,
Than the exploits themselves of other men.
His fair renown has charmed Micipsa so,
That he has sent large store of corn to the army;
And his ambassadors have made it known
To the senate, in full assembly, that their master
Perform'd this from his mere respect for Caius.

Cor. Oh, glorious boy! surpass thy mother's hopes!
What said the senate?—Were they not struck with this?
Did they not own the virtue of my son,
And praise the name of Gracchus?

Lic. They!—Alas!

Their proud blood bows to aught but virtue.. No;
The ambassadors were spurn'd,—driven out with shame,—
Sent back with scorn, as mere barbarians, who,
By showing their just preference of your son,
Slighted the senate of its due respect.

Lici. Unhappy Caius! thy conspicuous virtue
But marks thee out the victim of the senate!

Cor. It marks him out the favourite of the gods!
Think'st thou I rear'd my son to follow virtue
Only for men's acclaim? It ill had fitted
The child of Scipio, and had never made me
The mother of the Gracchi! [*Aside to LICINIUS.*] Say, Licinius,
Knows Caius this?

Lic. [*Aside to CORNELIA.*] He does, from many hands.
His friends are strong. The senate cannot hide
His worth from Rome. The people think of Caius
As their sole hope; and should he stand for tribune,
He must obtain the office.

Cor. What! and will
He stand for tribune? Wherefore do I ask?
Do I not know he will? [*Shouts without.*]

Lici. What means that shout?

Lic. Forgive me, sister, that I have conceal'd
The measures of his friends, who have advised him
To show himself at once in Rome. No doubt
'Tis Caius, and the people welcome him.

Lici. 'Tis Caius!—Hear I right?—'Tis he—My Caius!

Enter CAIUS GRACCHUS and POMPONIUS.

Caius. My soul, we meet again!—My honour'd mother!

Cor. The mother is honour'd in her son, my Caius.

Caius. Licinius—friend and brother! I received
Your letters, and I thank you for your care.

Licina, thank the gods! we meet again.

How is our boy, love?—How art thou thyself?

Let me look at thee. Well, as my heart could wish!

Great Jove! to gaze on such a precious thing,
 And know it mine! You may smile, Marcus, but
 There's such a thing as loving one's wife. Licinia,
 Am I not with thee again? Let him who thinks
 The world is worth his home, exchange home for it:
 A little time; he'll find he has lost a world,
 Not found one!

Enter LUCIUS.

Luc. Caius, a messenger
 From the senate.

Caius. Admit him. [LUCIUS goes out.
 Mother, you'll give me leave. Licinia,
 I've many things to tell thee. Count these gems, love;
 They were a gift to me for thee, from hands
 That only know thee from thy husband's tongue,
 Which ne'er could speak the moiety of thy worth!
 Go with my mother, Sweet! I have neglected
 Some matters of high duty, just to snatch
 This look at thee; and those must now be done.

Lici. You'll not be long; be with us soon!

Caius. No, Sweet!

Lici. Remember, now! [CORNELIA and LICINIA go out.

Enter a Lictor.

Lictor. The senate, Caius, cites you to appear
 Before the censors.

Caius. Well!—Acquaint the senate

I shall obey.

[Lictor goes out.

Pom. 'Twas rumour'd, ere you came,
 Opimius had return'd; on which account
 The senate had been suddenly convoked.

Caius. I look'd for this! Let me think—Let me think!—

Why, yes.

Nothing done rashly, nor yet timidly,
 The mean's discretion, back'd by calm resolve.
 I cannot do it!—My blood's a point too warm!
 To hear a man deal out morality,
 Axiom upon axiom—for an hour dilate
 Upon the value of an aphorism,—
 Amplify to o'errunning in the cause,
 And then, at every allegation,
 Invoke no less a witness than high Jove;
 And know him all the while to play the knave.
 Great Hercules! it sets my veins a-boiling!

Lic. Caius, you would need a rein
 More firmly ruled than this.

Caius. I know it—I know it,
 As well as you. Hang them! I'll try and play
 The cautious man for once. 'Tis time to choose
 New tribunes, is it not?

Pom. It is.

Caius. You see
 I'm not at home an hour, and they let loose
 The dogs upon me! Come!—to the Campus Martius!
 Now will you see them hold their hands to the gods!
 That saw my brother's blood upon those hands!
 They thought I had forgot that brother's death!
 Why, where's the Tiber?—Is it not at Rome?
 What!—Has it sunk!—run out!—Flows it not still,
 Its yellow hue turn'd purple, ever since!
 Its waters, blood; which all the floods of heaven
 Can't change again to water!—Blood! that cries
 For vengeance at a living brother's hand!

Lic. How do you mean to act? Your plans, my Caius?

Caius. My plans! Come with me to the Campus Martius!
 [They go out.]

SCENE III.—*The Campus Martius—the Portico of the Temple of Mars, under which the chairs for the Censors are placed.*

Enter TITUS and MARCUS.

Tit. So, Caius is returned from the army?

Mar. Ay; and there's not an honest man in Rome but's glad of it.

Tit. Why gather the people to the Campus Martius?

Mar. Here come two senators' gentlemen. They will inform you.

Enter SEXTUS and QUINTUS.

Tit. Health to you, master!

Sex. Health to you, master!

Tit. Can you tell us why the people gather this way?

Sex. For the old reason, friend: we are all good till we're tried.

Tit. Ay, indeed! What honest man has turned rogue to-day?

Sex. Many a one, I doubt; but chiefly he whom our good citizens believe the honestest in Rome.

Mar. Mean you your master, friend?

Sex. No; I mean the master of the people; the gentleman who feels for their empty stomachs, and gives them words to eat; your Caius Gracchus, who calls our tradesmen the nobility of Rome; and so indeed they are, if rags can make them so.

Mar. No bad evidence! You cannot wear the wool without shearing the sheep. But, pray, what's the matter with Caius Gracchus?

Sex. Only that he has returned from the army without his general's leave,—nothing more, except a whisper or two about the tumult at Fregella. 'Tis said he had a hand in it.

Mar. What's your opinion?

Sex. Believe me, it does not favour him.

Tit. What! you like the fare that the patricians give?

Sex. What fare?

Tit. A good dinner. Caius, you say, feeds the people upon words. A very natural preference! There's not a dog or an ass in Rome that would not be of your mind.

Sex. [*Raising his staff.*] Pray which of the two may you be, friend?

Mar. Why ask you?

Sex. Oh! merely that, upon occasion, I may know whether I ought to take my foot or my staff to you. No offence, I hope. I have all the respect in the world for you, believe me.

Tit. [*To MARCUS.*] You have the worst of it. Let me take him in hand. [*To SEXTUS.*] Hark you, master; a word with you.

Sex. Your pleasure, master?

Tit. How comes your cloak to have that gloss upon it?

Sex. Not by partaking of your grease, friend.

Tit. My grease! Why, man, there's as much fat in a tanned hide as in all my body! The patricians have sweated me to very leanness, and left me nothing to recruit withal, but hunger and nakedness.

Sex. They are right. They find that their cattle grow restive with abundance of provender.

Tit. But they feed their curs, friend.

Sex. Whom do you call a cur?

Tit. Down with your staff, master, for I have another that may ruffle the gloss of your cloak for you. What! has anything surprised you? Do you wonder that the order which wins your battles in the field, should refuse your blows in the city? You despise us when you have no need of us; but if an ounce of power or peculation is to be gained through our means, oh! then you put on your sweet looks, and, bowing to the very belts of our greasy jackets, you exclaim, "Fair gentlemen!—kind fellow-citizens!—loving comrades!—sweet, worthy, gentle Romans!—grant us your voices!" Or, if the enemy is to be opposed, oh! then we are "men of mettle!"—(poor starved devils!)—"the defenders of our country!"—(that is, your cattle as you call us)—and so indeed we are. We bear your patricians on our backs to victory; we carry them proudly through the ranks of the barbarians! They come off safe—we get the knocks, the pricks, and the scratches. They obtain crowns and triumphs,—we cannot obtain—a dinner! They get their actions recorded—we get ours forgotten! They receive new names and titles—we return to our old ones with which you honour us—"the rabble!—the herd!—the cattle!—the vermin!—the scum of Rome!"

Sex. Pray, friend, will you look at this staff of mine?

Tit. I look at it, friend.

Sex. Is it not a staff, friend?

Tit. Yes, if a staff is a staff, friend.

Sex. If I am weary, it enables me to rest myself; if I am lame, it helps me to walk; if I quarrel, it knocks down my adversary; and yet, is it not always a staff, friend?

Mar. [*To TITUS.*] You have the worst of it now. Let me

attack him. Hark you, master. Does your staff ever knock its owner on the pate?

Sex. What do you mean?

Mar. [*Striking him.*] Why thus.

Sex. Do you want to quarrel?

Mar. Oh! by no means. I only wanted to show you the difference between a staff and a man, friend.

Tit. Turn on him again. I'll second you, and here is a troop of friends at hand.

Qui. Bear with him no longer. Hither comes a band of our comrades. I'll beckon them to make haste. [*Calling off.*] Come on, come on! These greasy citizens are uttering treason against our masters, the noble patricians.

Enter Servants.

Mar. Hem!—Shall we go over the argument again, master? Is there anything else your staff can do?

Sex. Yes; when I carry it heedlessly, it sometimes chances to—trip me. [*Trips MARCUS.*]

Tit. Help, help, there!

[*Enter Citizens.—Confused cry of “Down with the Citizens!” “Down with the Slaves and Servants!” They are about to attack each other, when FLAMINIUS’S voice without stops them.*]

Enter FLAMINIUS, TUDITANUS, OPIMIUS, Senators, two Censors, and twelve Lictors.

Fla. Hold! hold! I charge you, you rash citizens! What means this tumult? How! is peace so old That you are weary of it? Who began This fray?

Sex. That caitiff yonder.

Tit. Our old names!

Mar. 'Twas that patrician's hireling that began it.

CAIUS GRACCHUS, and his Friends POMPONIUS and LICINIUS, appear behind.

Opi. Silence! ye wrangling discontented men! Ye pest of Rome! What stirs you to this brawl? I know your cue!—Your Gracchus has return'd, And ye give signal straight of discontent, Conspiracy, and foul rebellion! A noble leader for your noble party! A glorious soldier, that returns to Rome Without his general's leave! A worthy son Of Rome, that tampers with her enemies, And instigates her allies to revolt! An honest patriot——

[*Seeing CAIUS GRACCHUS close to him, he checks himself.*]

Caius. Proceed, Opimius!

Now is your proper time to speak. I am here——

Gracchus is here! Gracchus, that draws not on
A foe behind his back!

[OPIMIUS is confused—he walks sullenly to the place
appointed for him as the accuser of CAIUS GRACCHUS
—GRACCHUS fixes his eyes steadfastly upon OPIMIUS,
who betrays considerable embarrassment.]

Opi. [Recovering.] This lofty bearing
Befits the man who quits his post, without
His general's leave; and used the sacred power
His office gave him, to pervert the faith
His duty 'twas to guard; as, amply, can
Fregella testify!

Caius. Is this your charge?
Censors! I'll save your labour. It appears
I am cited here, because I have return'd
Without my general's leave, and for the crime
Of having raised the tumult at Fregella.
First, with the first. I have remain'd my time;
Nay, I have overserved it by the laws—
The laws which Caius Gracchus dares not break.
But, censors, let that pass. I shall propose
A better question for your satisfaction:
"How have I served my time?" I'll answer that.
"How have I served my time?"—"For mine own gain,
Or that of the republic?" What was my office?
Questor. What was its nature? Lucrative;
So lucrative, that all my predecessors,
Who went forth poor, return'd home rich—so rich
Their very wine-vessels resign'd their store
Of fluid wealth, only for wealthier freight
Of solid gold. I went forth, poor enough;
But have return'd still poorer than I went.
Then, for my conduct as a soldier,
I do not blush to say, I have prevail'd
By mercy more than rapine. I have won
From enemies their hearts, before their arms;
And held the tributary states to Rome,
By friendship more than fear. I have answer'd that.

First Censor. If you have served your time, and faithfully
Discharged your duty, as a Roman questor,
So far you are acquitted.

Opi. To the next, then—
The tumult at Fregella.

Caius. Ay, to that!
Produce your proofs!

Opi. I charge you, as your general.

Caius. Your proofs—your evidence—your witnesses.

Opi. Is it from thee I hear this haughty challenge?
Who best should know thy actions? Wast thou not
Mine officer? I charge thee with the treason.
Before the gods, I charge thee with it, Caius;
I say, I charge thee as thy general.

Caius. Thou daring noble! Is it to the face
Of these upright authorities, thou claim'st
To be at once the witness and accuser?
Say, censors, is it fit? Is it the law?

First Censor. The law permits it not. The accusation
And proof, in such a case, cannot reside
In the same person. Caius Gracchus, therefore,
Is free, unless you furnish other warrant
For his impeachment. [*The Censors rise*]

Opi. Censors, it is fit
You look to the public safety. If our criminals
Escape their penalties, your prisons and
Your chains will soon be our inheritance.

Caius. Have the laws lost their reverence?
Fla. The charge
Is heavy!

Caius. Heavy as the proofs are light.
Ye citizens of Rome, behold what favour
Your masters show your brethren! I have borne
My country's arms with honour; overserved
My time; return'd in poverty, that might
Have amass'd treasures; and they thus reward me—
Prefer a charge against me without proof,
Direct or indirect—without a testimony,
Weighty or light—without an argument,
Idle or plausible—without as much
Of feasibility, as would suffice
To feed suspicion's phantom! Why is this?
How have I bought this hatred? When my brother,
Tiberius Gracchus, fell beneath their blows,
I call'd them not assassins! When his friends
Fell sacrifices to their after-vengeance,
I did not style them butchers! When their hatred
Drove the Numidian nobles from the senate,
With scoffs and execrations, when they praised me,
And to my cause assign'd the royal bounty
Of King Micipsa, still I did not call them
The proud, invidious, insolent patricians! [*The people cheer*

Opi. Hear ye!

Caius. Ye men of Rome, there is no favour
For justice!—Grudgingly her dues are granted!
Your great men boast no more the love of country!
They count their talents—measure their domains—
Number their slaves—make lists of knights and clients—
Enlarge their palaces—dress forth their banquets,
Awake their lyres and timbrels, and with their floods
Of ripe Falernian, drown the little left
Of Roman virtue!

Opi. He would raise a tumult!

Caius. This hand's the first to turn against the man,
Whoe'er he be, that favours civil discord!
I have no gust for blood, Opimius!
I sacrifice to justice and to mercy!

Opi. He has aspersed the justice of our order;
He flatters the plebeians, and should be
Attach'd and brought to question for this conduct.

Caius. Romans, I ask the office of your tribune!

[*Tumultuous cheers.*]

Mar. Ay! you shall have it! Gracchus shall be tribune!

Tit. Gracchus tribune! Caius Gracchus tribune!

Opi. Stay, friends! Take heed! Beware of flatterers!

Caius. The laws! the laws! that guard the common right!

The wealth, the happiness, the freedom of

The nation! Who has hidden them—defaced them—

Sold them—corrupted them from the pure letter?

Why do they guard the rich man's cloak from a rent,

And tear the poor man's garment from his back?

Why are they, in the proud man's grasp, a sword,

And in the hand of the humble man, a reed?

The laws! the laws! I ask you for the laws!

Demand them in my country's sacred name!

Still silent? Reckless still of my appeal?

Romans! I ask the office of your tribune!

[*CAIUS GRACCHUS and his party go out, followed by
Citizens, shouting.*]

Opi. Stop him from rising, or our order falls!

[*OPIMIUS, and the rest, go out.*]

SCENE IV.—*A Street—a Gate of the City.*

Enter TITUS and MARCUS, with Citizens.

Tit. The work goes nobly on! Caius is sure to be tribune.
This is a happy day for Rome!

Mar. Ay, the people will have their rights. We shall know
ourselves now, masters. See, hither comes a crowd of voters;
let us speak to them.

Enter Voters.

Health to you, masters! Are you going to vote?

First Voter. Yes; if we can find an honest candidate.

Mar. Here's one ready to your hands, masters; Caius
Gracchus. Choose him, and you'll do good service to your
country. He'll see that you shall have your rights, nor will
the patricians dare to curl their noses when they pass us,
as if we were so much carrion. Look you, masters, Caius
is a friend of the plebeians; he respects our order, and so he
ought; and, therefore, let every good citizen support him.
Away, my friends! Vote, and cry, Caius!

Voters. Caius Gracchus! Huzza! [*They go out.*]

Mar. He's sure of the election. The patricians will eat
poor suppers to-night.

Enter Voters.

Save you, masters; are you going to vote for the right candidate?

First Voter. Do you think we'd vote for the wrong one?

Tit. Then you'll vote for Caius Gracchus?

First Voter. No; I don't like him. They say he'll bring the state into danger. We are men that love peace and concord.

Tit. Ay, and good feeding. Hark you, master; take these cattle to the stalls of the patricians. The patricians make profitable masters. They give stripes only now and then; but that's nothing, you know, to a kindly beast. Away, I say!—to the stalls with them! [*They go out severally.*]

Enter LICINIA and CORNELIA.

Cor. Caius, you see, is nowhere to be found. Let us go home again.

Lici. Not till I see him.

Livia was right; he'll surely stand for tribune. Let's seek him in the Forum.

Cor. Are you mad?

Go to the Forum after him! All Rome would talk of it. When did you know a wife Follow her husband to the Forum? Why, 'Twould set all fingers pointing! Men would say, "Caius did well to take a wife to school him;" And every woman would cry "shame" upon him. I'd rather lose a husband, than have people So talk of mine.

Lici. You wish him to be tribune?

Cor. Licinia, no; I wish it not, my daughter; But still I know, that if he will be tribune, He will; and, knowing that, the unwelcome thought That needs must be my guest I treat with grace, For mine own dignity, and his contentment, Which should not, profitless, be marr'd. [*Shouts without.*]

My child,

Why do you grasp me by the arm, and tremble? The people shout for joy.

Lici. It is a kind

Of joy that's fearful to my mind. The breeze That kindly bears the gladsome bark along, Has oft been known to grow the hurricane That sends her to the bottom!

Cor. Take her, Livia.

Go, both of you, look down the other street, While I watch here. 'Chance you may light on Caius.

[*LICINIA and LIVIA go out.*]

'Tis Marcus, and with news! She's best away!

Mar. [*Entering.*] Cornelia!—

Cor. Quick!—Your news! What has he done?

Mar. Proposed himself for tribune!

Cor. Full well I knew that it would come to this!
 And I could tell what further it will come to,
 If I would. No matter. Two such sons as mine
 Were never made for mothers that have eyes
 Afraid of tears. Why did I rear my boys
 Companions for the gods, if not for this?
 Many a time, when they stood before me,
 Such things as mothers seldom look upon,
 And I have seem'd to feed on them with mine eyes;
 My thoughts have ponder'd o'er the bier, where they
 Lay stiff and cold! I would not see them so
 If I could help it; but I would not help it
 To see them otherwise, and other men.
 My Caius must be tribune!

[*Shouts several times, approaching nearer.*]

Lic. [*Entering.*] Caius is tribune!
 Those shouts proclaim it. [*Looking off.*] See, Cornelia,
 He comes! Behold!—Look how they hem him round!
 Why do you turn away?

Cor. I turn away
 To see that flush of triumph on his cheek
 Which lights it as he felt himself a god;
 And think how I may, after, see that cheek,
 And think upon that flush! Licinia's well
 Away; it had o'ercome her quite. Come, Licinius.

[*CORNELIA and LICINIUS retire.*]

*Enter CAIUS GRACCHUS, DRUSUS, POMPONIUS, TITUS,
 MARCUS, and Citizens, shouting.*

Caius. No more, my friends!—no more of this, I pray
 you!

Disperse to your several homes. Why do you give
 These honours to your servant?

Tit. Suffer us
 To see you to your house.

Mar. Yes, Caius, yes,
 We'll hail your honour'd mother and your wife.

Pom. Indulge the people, Gracchus.

Caius. Well, my friends,
 If you will go with me—[*Seeing CORNELIA.*] My honour'd
 mother!

Cor. May the great gods, who crown'd thee with this
 triumph,
 Instruct thee so to use it as to bless
 Thy country! With a firm and mighty hand,
 Mayst thou uphold the laws, and keep them ever
 Above the proud man's violence, and within
 The poor man's reach; so shall thy mother—Rome—
 Acknowledge thee her son, and teach thy name
 To the applauding tongues of after-ages!

Who is your brother tribune?

Caius. Worthy Drusus.

Cor. [*To DRUSUS.*] My son is happy in his colleague, sir,
And let me trust, will not dishonour him.

Dru. My honour is to second him, Cornelia.

Caius. Come, mother.

[*Going.*]

Re-enter LICINIA and LIVIA, meeting them.

Lic. Ha! Licinia!

Cor. [*Going up to her.*] My Licinia!
For Caius' honour act like Caius' wife:
He's tribune.

Lici. Tribune!

Cor. Think what eyes are on you!
You are the mother of a Roman, too!
Summon your spirits! That's my daughter! Come
Up to him now at once, and wish him joy,—
'Tis but an effort, and the words are out!

Lici. [*Crossing to CAIUS.*] Caius,—

Caius. Licinia!

Lici. Caius! I do give you joy!

[*She faints on his arm, and the curtain drops.*]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Rome.*

Enter FLAMINIUS and OPIMIUS.

Opi. Mark'd you, Flaminius, how they look'd at us?
That was defiance. I could read the name
Of Gracchus on those daring brows of theirs.
Behoves us now a meek look, where, before,
We gave a scowl. The people are our masters.
That Rome should ever see it!

Fla. We must bear it.

Opi. Ay, while our blood boils! We must smile, Flaminius,
And, at the same time, grind our teeth, if so
It pleases Gracchus. Gods! that a man I could take
By the throat and smite—yea, set my foot upon
For perfect loathing,—whom I should think it righteous
To slay in a temple—ay, by Hercules!
At the altar of a temple,—that a man
Like that should order me, and do it too
By vilest instruments! It is a task
For patience!

Fla. Never king was absolute
In Rome as he; his will is law. Popilius
Can witness that, self-banish'd to escape

A heavier doom. The senate has he lopp'd
Of half its power, with his three hundred knights
Whom he has named assistants to it, with
Equality of voices. Then, the state
Our modest tribune keeps! He never moves
But in a crowd of knights, ambassadors,
Soldiers, and magistrates, artificers,
And men of letters, that attend upon him.
There's not a man in Rome but Caius Gracchus.

Opi. Nay, there's another, my Flaminius;
His colleague, Livius Drusus. Don't you know him?

Fla. I do. A quiet, simple, honest man,
Who follows Gracchus with a modest zeal,
And rather seems, from an unaiming spirit,
To second his designs, than help them on
From principle.

Opi. You have described him well,
As he appears; I know him as he is.
'Tis opportunity that proves a man;
And, trust me, Livius Drusus is not one,
That, having power, lacks will, to overtop
His fellow. I shall use this Livius Drusus,
To combat Gracchus, with the very means
That make him to be fear'd. Have patience, and
You'll see my policy. They're coming to
The Forum—Drusus last! This shows me my
Exordium.

*Enter CAIUS GRACCHUS, preceded by a Lictor, LICINIUS, POM-
PONIUS, FLACCUS, FULVIUS, TITUS, MARCUS, twelve Citizens,
and DRUSUS last.*

Caius. Health to Flaminius!

Fla. Health to Gracchus!

Opi. What business is to-day before the commons?

Caius. Some colonies we think to send from Rome;
To the late conquer'd cities. Does Opimius
Approve the measure?

Opi. Gracchus asks the question,
As though he thought Opimius did not love
The people's good. 'Twere happy for the people,
If those, who flatter them, loved it as well.

Caius. Whom does Opimius call the people's flatterer?

Opi. Him who would feed the people's vanity,
By making them aspire above themselves.

Caius. Opimius, then, is not the people's flatterer.
How does he rate them? As we rate our herds.
How would he use them? As we use our herds.

Oh! may the people ever have such flatterers
As guard them from the kindness of such friends!

[CAIUS GRACCHUS and his party go out—DRUSUS is
following him, when OPIMIUS, with affected surprise,
stops him.

Opi. Why, Livius Drusus, is it you? I thought
You were not come abroad to-day. No wonder:
You're not the man, methinks, it suits to close
The train that waits upon your colleague there.
Ah, Drusus! if the Romans knew their friends,
They would not follow Gracchus thus, and leave
His betters at their heels!

Dru. I do not court
Their favour, good Opimius. It contents me
To know that I discharge, with honesty,
The duty of their tribune.

Opi. Livius Drusus,
'There's not a man in Rome but, if he speaks
The truth, will say, you do. I say it for one.
So does Flaminius. Were you not hurried now,
'There's something, Drusus, I would say to show you
What men think of you; but, as 'tis, I'll keep it
Till you have time. Yet this, before you go,
I would I were a bosom-friend of yours,
To do you a friend's office. Give me your hand!
I like you, Drusus, you're an honest tribune!
I say, I like you; and if I did not say it
Behind your back, I would not to your face.
Farewell! Perhaps you're not so call'd for, neither,
But you could spare a moment?

Dru. If it be
Your pleasure—

Opi. Thank you, Drusus, thank you! This
Is very kind of you. You know Flaminius?

Dru. I know his fair report.

Opi. You know himself, then;
But know him better. Take him by the hand.

[FLAMINIUS crosses to DRUSUS, and takes his hand.
He wants to know you better than by report.

Dru. I would I knew how to deserve this honour.

Opi. I would you knew what honour you deserve!
Drusus, it is their loss, and yet their grace,
That men of true worth seldom know themselves,—
Whence mere pretension gets the upper hand,—
And such the mass account as common men,
As the unskill'd will oft take unwrought gold
For brass. Drusus, it makes me mad
To see the sterling'st ore thrown by, and what
Is basest, hoarded only for the stamp
Which the other only wants! I wish I had
The coining of you, Drusus!

Dru. You would find
You overweigh'd me.

Opi. Not a grain, by Jupiter!
Or never weigh'd I yet an honest man.
And here's to try it. Would you, Drusus, dare
To achieve a thing you could and ought?

Dru. I were not
A man else.

Opi. Every one that knows you, Drusus,
Knows that you are a man, but are you *such*
A man?

Dru. I think I am.

Opi. I think so, too.

But, ever, what we most desire to be
We fear may not be, though we know not why
We fear it.—Drusus, I'll deal frankly with you;
I will not hesitate, nor wind about,
Nor speak by halves, as if I fear'd to let
My thoughts go from me. Listen to me, then.
Rome is in danger—discord reigns in her;
Her orders are opposed among themselves,
The people hate the senate, call us proud,
Cruel, luxurious, avaricious; masters,
Oppressors, tyrants—men, alas! my Drusus,
That are not masters even of their own!
The cause of this is Caius Gracchus. He,
For his own aims, lets no occasion pass
To inflame the commons; wherefore, he revives
Old grievances, or fancies present, or
Predicts to come; and should his course hold on
Without obstruction, Rome will rue the end!
The senate, Drusus, justly fearing this,
Have much debated on the remedy:
And all at length agree there is but one,
Namely, to find a man that's fit to mediate
Between them and the people. Drusus, thou
Art he!

Dru. Alas! what weight have I, Opimius,
To bear against the weight of Caius Gracchus?

Opi. What weight hast thou! Thou good and honest man!
Now, by the gods, I love thee, Drusus, for
Thy true simplicity! What weight hast thou!
Why, hast thou not the weight of Caius Gracchus?
You share one office—the same cares divide,
The same responsibilities; why not
The same respect? Oh, Livius Drusus! Caius
Were not content did Drusus lead the people,
And Gracchus humbly follow at their heels!
But let that pass. Deal frankly with a friend.
What think you, Drusus? Do the senate hate
The people?

Dru. Nay, I would believe they did not.

Opi. I know you would; I think you *do*; but much
I wonder that you do. 'Tis not the fashion
I love you, Drusus!—Drusus, do you think
I shuffle with you?—Do not answer me!
I am sure you do not. Take my word then, Drusus.
The senate love the people. Ay, I know

'Tis easily said, but I will prove it to you.
 Know, then, I have been deputed to solicit
 Your friendship for the senate—not to oppose,
 As once Octavius did the former Gracchus,
 But to outdo your colleague in his plans
 In favour of the people, still proposing
 Some law for their additional advantage;
 And only stating—as in simple fairness
 You should—that so the senate had express'd
 Their wishes—nothing farther. By this means,
 The people will be served; the senate plac'd
 Again in confidence; your rival stripp'd
 Of dangerous influence; yourself exalted,
 According to your worth; and, to sum up
 The whole at once, your country saved from ruin.

Fla. You cannot hesitate in such a cause?

Dru. I undertake the trust with sacred zeal;
 And, if I can compose the present evils,
 Shall deem myself most happy.

Opi. I am sure of it,
 And shall with joy report this to the senate.
 Meanwhile, be often with us. Let us know
 Your wishes for the people; we'll promote them.
 What you say *should* be, *shall* be, on your saying,
 Or break at once with us. The tribes shall know
 What 'tis to have a tribune of repute,
 Who does not use his office to promote
 Cabal, and strife, and jealousy, and hate,
 Like certain gentlemen.

To your work at once!

But, hark you, Livius Drusus; tell me truly,
 Are you not over modest? Come! confess, now.
 I know you are—I know, that, should the senate
 Give you your choice of honours, you'd refuse
 To challenge e'en the smallest! Well, no matter!
 Such men live for their country. Heed not Gracchus,
 If he upbraid you—If? Should the plebeians
 Give but one shout for Drusus, he'll be sick
 With all the gall of envy! Come to the senate
 To-morrow. Be not strange with us, good Livius!
 Mark him now! Heed him well, for he is wily,
 And thou art simple in thine honesty.
 You'll come to the senate, to-morrow? Eye him, Drusus;
 He's a rank traitor! Mind to-morrow, now.
 So, farewell, honest Drusus! [DRUSUS goes out.]

Fla. Nobly play'd!

Opi. Beyond my hopes. Let us inform our friends;
 And as the choice of tribunes is at hand,
 Prevent his re-election. [Shouts.] That's for Gracchus!
 Ay, shout away! Unmoved, we'll hear you soon:
 The trap is ready: Let the lion roar! [They go out.]

SCENE II.—*The Forum.*

CAIUS GRACCHUS *discovered in the Rostrum*—TITUS, MARCUS,
and Citizens—the people shout.

Caius. No more, my friends! How often must I tell you,
You should not pay these honours to your tribune?

Tit. Long may you live, Caius!

Mar. Prosperously and long!

Hither comes honest Drusus. Shall we shout for him?

Tit. Why should we? Think you, he is any great friend
to the people? Not he! Is he not a quiet, easy, contented
man, who lets things take their course? Can such a man be
a friend to the people? No, no; he is no friend to the people.
He is well enough in his place, because he keeps a rogue out
of it; and just says ay, and no, according to the will of Caius.

Mar. You say right. For my part, I never liked your
peaceful, honest man. Give me a stirring fellow, that will
browbeat the nobles, and call the authorities to account.
That's your only tribune.

Enter DRUSUS.

Caius. Drusus, I have waited for you! I am glad you have
come.

Mar. [*Apart to TITUS.*] Observe, he hasn't hurried himself.
[*To the Citizens.*] Make way for Drusus!—[*DRUSUS ascends
the rostrum.*] Make way there—Let the good man pass! You
may know by his gait that he loves high feeding, and sleeps
one-half of the day, for having dozed away the other half.

Tit. Silence! Caius is going to speak. Cheer him, masters!

All. Huzza! Long live Caius!

Caius. Here, Romans, are some drafts of new decrees
We mean to offer for your approbation.

I know not whether you will think them wise;
But this I know, the hand that drew them up,
Belongs to one, who would die to do you good.

Tit. Worthy Caius!

All. Long may you live, Caius!

Caius. With grief we see you bare of many goods,
That make life sweet. Your wretchedness afflicts
The heart of Caius. Thousands of brave men,
Wandering about the streets of Rome, without
Means, or employment to procure them! Now,
We here direct two colonies to be sent
To the late conquer'd cities.

Tit. Noble Caius!

Mar. Worthy Caius!

All. [*Shouting.*] Caius for ever!

Dru. My countrymen—

Mar. Drusus is going to speak. Now for an oration!

Dru. You need not learn I lack those noble parts,
Which make the orator you love to hear.

I have no merit but my honesty;
 And 'tis my honesty that says to you,
 I'd die with Caius for the good of Rome!

Tit. Yes, yes; Drusus is an honest, quiet, good sort of man. That everybody must say for him; but as for his speech, I'd make as good a one myself. Cheer him, masters—cheer him! *[The people cheer faintly.]*

Dru. I do not ask you to applaud me, Romans;
 I love your welfare better than your praise.

Mar. Come, come, that's very well, now; cheer for that, masters;—very well, indeed, for Drusus! Cheer! cheer!

[They cheer louder.]

Dru. I thank you, fellow-citizens. Don't mind me.

Mar. Cheer him again, masters! *[A general cheer.]*

Dru. Romans, I know my colleague's love for you;
 And yet, methinks, he stints it in this measure.
 Two colonies! What are two colonies?
 Two handfuls! He should stretch this grant, and ease
 The groaning and debilitated state!
 Two handfuls of the people, to two cities!
 Caius for once adopts half-measures. I
 Propose, that to each city there be sent
 Three thousand of the poorest citizens—
 Three thousand to each city.

Mar. Worthy Drusus! noble Drusus! Huzza!

All. Huzza!

Dru. Countrymen,
 Pay me no thanks! Indeed you owe me none;
 I only speak the wishes of the senate.

Mar. The senate! May we cheer for the senate?

Tit. To be sure, if they do the people good!

Mar. Huzza for the senate, masters! huzza!

All. Huzza!

Caius. Indeed! The senate! For the people's sake,
 We, also, thank the senate. Worthy Romans,
 Now our affairs put on a prosperous face,
 The senate send you favours. We thank the senate!
 But not this mighty kindness of the senate
 Can set my cares at rest. I have made an estimate
 Of certain waste uncultivated lands,
 South of the Tiber. These—however, subject
 To certain trifling services and rents—
 We here allot to fifteen hundred families
 From the plebeians of the lowest class.

Tit. Noble Caius! worthy Caius! Cheer, masters!

Mar. Stop! Drusus is going to speak. Hear what Drusus says.

Dru. Romans, my worthy colleague, whom I honour,
 Seems not to love that you should owe the senate
 Favour or justice.

Caius. Drusus!

Mar. Go on, Drusus! let him go on! Come, come, Drusus must have fair play.

All. Drusus! Drusus!

Dru. If 'tis your pleasure, friends, to hear my colleague
Rather than me, you only have to say it.

All. No! no! no! Go on! go on!

Dru. I care not who befriends you, worthy citizens;
The senate or the tribunes. The more friends
You have, the less you will have need of me.

Mar. Good, honest man, go on!

All. Go on! go on!

Dru. I say—and if I know the thing I say,
Am I not right in saying it?—I say,
The senate wish the people to be happy,
And do not want to tax them. Noble Caius
Might have gone farther in this act of his,
And not displeas'd the senate; therefore, I,
Without regard to his decree, enact,
That certain waste, uncultivated lands,
Lying north of Rome, be straight parcell'd out
To fifteen hundred of the poorest families,
Free of all rent and service.

Mar. A noble decree, noble Drusus! The worthy senate!
Huzza for Drusus and the senate!

Dru. My friends, think not of Drusus! Thank the senate.

Mar. Good, honest man! He is too modest to take the
praise to himself; he gives it all to the senate. Observe Caius—
he changes colour; he envies Drusus; he doesn't like the ap-
plause we give to Drusus. Applaud the good man again.
Long live Drusus! Drusus and the senate for ever! Huzza!

All. Huzza!

Caius. May I be heard, my friends?

Tit. Speak, Gracchus, speak!

Mar. Drusus for ever!

Caius. Rome—Rome, my friends, for ever!

Whoe'er is good—whoe'er is just and great—

The honour be to Rome, our common mother!

I have warn'd you oft! Look to your liberties,—

Beware the senate's arts! beware her tools!

Dru. How! Caius—

Caius. Nay, good Livius Drusus!

Mar. Not a word against Drusus!

All. No! no! no!

Mar. The senate has acted well in this.

All. It has! it has!

Caius. I am content—If you approve it, masters,

I am content. I cannot help my fears;

But let it pass. I'll say, I am content!

Masters, I never yet incurr'd your censure:

If I am over-watchful for your safety,

Guarding you 'gainst the chance of treachery,—

If I suspect—But, since it pleases you,

I'll not suspect this kindness of the senate!

And yet it may be ask'd—when you were weak,

And needed friends, where was the senate's kindness ?
 Then you might help yourselves ; now you are strong,
 It stretches forth its hands to give you aid !
 I think, 'twas not the kindness of the senate
 That gave me counsel, when my first decree
 Declared the magistrate to be infamous,
 Who was deposed by judgment of the people.
 Or, when my next enacted, that the magistrate,
 Who banish'd, without law, a citizen,
 Should answer the assembly of the people.
 Or, when, to give you plenitude of power,
 I granted each inhabitant of Latium
 The right of suffrage !

Tit. Hear him ! hear him !

Mar. Silence ! Drusus is going to speak.

Dru. Romans, I'll not pretend to say how much
 You owe the senate ; be it much, or little,
 Or nothing. Only, while they wish to serve you,
 I'll not speak ill of them. They have desired me
 To show you favour. Mark me—have desired me !
 Should I be jealous of them ? Words, my friends,
 Are air ; but actions are substantial things,
 That warrant judgment. But we'll not debate
 Their truth or falsehood. They appear to favour us,
 And let us take advantage of their seeming !
 My colleague, Caius, as he just now said,
 Has given to the inhabitants of Latium
 The right to vote—the right of citizens.
 Has not this act, then, made them citizens ?
 And yet, my friends, the Latin soldier feels
 The scourge—He feels the scourge !—an infamy,
 That never should approach the freeman's back !
 We now decree, that it shall be unlawful,
 Henceforth for any captain of our legions
 To beat with rods a soldier of that nation.

Mar. A noble decree !—Worthy Drusus !—A noble decree !
 Huzza !

Dru. My friends, I now depart ; but, ere I leave you,
 Let me declare, that whatsoe'er I have done,
 I have done with the approval of the senate.

[*Descends from the rostrum.*]

Mar. We'll follow you home, Drusus ! [*GRACCHUS hurries down the steps.*] We'll follow you home ! We'll cheer the senators as we pass them ; we'll follow you home !

Dru. Nay, my good friends !

Mar. Come, come ; let us follow him to his house.

Dru. Well ; since you will not be denied—

[*Going.*]

Caius. Stay, Livius Drusus ! Let me speak with you.

Dru. Your pleasure, Caius ?

Caius. Pleasure ! Livius Drusus,
 Look not so sweet upon me. I am no child
 Not to know bitter, for that it is smear'd

With honey! Let me rather see thee scowl
A little. When thou speak'st, remind me rather
Of the rough trumpet, more than the dulcet lute.
By Jove! I can applaud the honest caitiff
That shows his craft.

Dru. The caitiff!

Caius. Ah!—Ho!—Now
You are Livius Drusus—that was just before
The man we took you for—the easy man,
That, so the world went right, cared not who got
The praise; but rather from preferment shrunk,
Than courted it. Who ever thought, in such
A plain and homely piece of stuff, to see
The crafty senate's tool?

Dru. The senate's tool!

Caius. Now, what a deal of pains for little profit!
If you could play the juggler with me, Livius—
To such perfection practise seeming as
To pass it on me for reality—
Make my own senses witness 'gainst myself,
That things I know impossible to be,
I see as palpable as if they were:
'Twere worth the acting; but, when I am master
Of all your mystery, and know, as well
As you do, that the prodigy's a lie,
What wanton waste of labour! Livius Drusus,
I know you are a tool!

Dru. Well, let me be so.

I will not quarrel with you, worthy Caius;
Call me whate'er you please.

Caius. What barefaced shifting!

What real fierceness could grow tame so soon!
You turn upon me like a tiger, and
When open-mouth'd I brave you, straight you play
The crouching spaniel! You'll not quarrel with me!
I want you not to quarrel, Livius Drusus,
But only to be honest to the people.

Dru. Honest!

Caius. Ay, honest! Why do you repeat
My words, as if you fear'd to trust your own?
Do I play echo? Question me, and see
If I so fear to be myself, to act
The wall, which speaks not but with others' tongues!
I say you are not honest to the people!—
I say you are the senate's tool—their bait—
Their juggler—their trick-merchant! If I wrong you,
Burst out at once, and, free, retort upon me;
Tell me I lie, and smite me to the earth!
I'll rise and, then, embrace you.

Dru. My good Caius,
Restrain your ardent temper! It betrays you
Into madness.

Caius. Give me but an answer, and
I'll be content. Are you not leagued with the senate?

Dru. Your wit forsakes you, Caius!

Caius. Will you answer me?

Dru. Throw off this humour!

Caius. Give me an answer, Drusus.

Dru. Madman!

Caius. Are you the creature of the senate?

Dru. Good Caius!

Caius. Do you juggle with the people?

Let me but know you, man, from your own lips;—
There wants but that, you know, to prove the traitor.

Dru. The traitor!

Caius. Ay!

Dru. To whom?

Caius. To the poor people,—

The houseless citizens, that sleep at nights
Beneath the portals, and that starve by day
Under the noses of the senators!

Thou art their magistrate, their friend, their father:
Dost thou betray them? Hast thou sold them? Wilt thou
Juggle them out of the few friends they have left?

Dru. If 'twill content you, Caius, I am one
Who loves alike the senate and the people,—
I am the friend of both.

Caius. The friend of neither!

The senate's tool!—a traitor to the people!
A man that seems to side with neither party;
Will now bend this way, and then make it up,
By leaning a little to the other side:—
With one eye, glance his pity on the crowd,
And with the other, crouch to the nobility!
Such men are the best instruments of tyranny!
The simple slave is easily discern'd
By his external badge: your order wears
The infamy within!

Dru. I'll leave you, Caius,
And hope your breast will harbour better counsels.
Grudge you the senate's kindness to the people?
'Tis well! Whoe'er serves them, shows love to me.

[*Goes out, followed by the people, shouting.*]

Caius. Go! I have till'd a waste, and, with my sweat,
Brought hope of fruitage forth. The superficial
And heartless soil cannot sustain the shoot:
The first harsh wind that sweeps it, leaves it bare!
Fool that I was to till it! Let them go!
I loved them and I served them!—Let them go!

Enter VETTIVS.

Vet. Why, Caius, what's the matter, that the people
Crowd after Drusus?

Caius. Matter! Know you why
The wind was all the morning in the south,

Sits now at north—Canst show the cause of that?
 When thou canst tell why turns the fitful wind,
 I'll tell thee why the people follow Drusus!

Vet. More wonder yet! There stood a group of senators
 Under a portico, and, as they pass'd,
 They cheer'd them—cheer'd the senators! I thought
 They must be mad.

Caius. No, no! they are not mad.
 There's not a day in the month, or year, they are
 Of sounder mind. They know as well to-day,
 As they did yesterday, what things they look at—
 That Rome is Rome; that I am Caius; he
 They follow, Drusus; and the senators,
 They cheer, the senators! They are not mad;
 But thou art mad to think them so, because
 They act the deeds of madmen!

Enter LICINIUS.

Lic. Caius!—Ha!
 Well met. Bad news!

Caius. Bad news, and well met, say you?
 Why, so it is: for, were you Pluto's herald,
 You could not pluck a smile from Caius' cheek,
 Would pay the labour of destroying. Come,
 Your news!

Lic. Opimius will be consul.

Caius. Well;
 I'm tribune.

Lic. Pray you, show yourself among
 The people, else their hearts are lost.
 Your enemies have won them, half, already!
 Orders shake hands!—Patrician and plebeian,
 That walk'd, before, so wide asunder, now
 Go arm in arm!—Quinctius is mate for Curtius,
 That kisses shoulders with him!—Livius, for Servius
 That plucks great Livius by the cloak; and, then,
 Knits fingers with him, while he whispers in
 His ear, and calls him his "good Livius;" who
 Leans cheek to him, and smiles, though, all the while
 He cares as much for Servius, as he does
 For Servius' shoe! Let them not, Caius, have
 The game to themselves! Dispute it with them! Come
 Among the people!

Caius. Never did I play
 The beggar yet, nor will I now! 'Tis not
 My craft, nor will I learn it, Marcus; no,
 Not e'en to win the people!

Enter POMPONIUS.

Pom. Where is Caius?

Caius. Here! here! What makes the man in such request
 That's out of favour with the people?

Pom. Look

To your office! Half the votes are promised 'gainst
The next Comitia. Spare no pains to win
The people's favour back again; or, mind!
You are no longer tribune.

Lic. Persuade him not; you will but lose your labour.
Let *us* go to the people, and convince them,
'Tis for their safety, they retain their tribune. [*Goes out*]

Pom. Follow him, Caius! Seek the people!

Caius. Not a foot

I'll stir to win them. Though the price of their love
Were but the breath that ask'd for't, it should go
Unbought for me! What! would they take our tigers,
They've seen a hundred times tear limb from limb
The malefactor—would they take them, think you,
For dogs, suppose they fawn'd on them? No wonder
And if they should! I will not go among them,
To pay court to them for their own sakes; cry,
"Be served, I pray you, masters! pray you, be served!
Consent that I supply you food; provide you
Clothing and lodging; find you lands to till!"—
While, all the time, they lean the ear to Drusus,
And I must pull them by the cloak to win
Attention! No! No honest man could do it!
I will not go among them! If they are told
That poison's poison, yet will swallow it
For food, in Jove's name, let them! Nothing but
The proving on't will satisfy them. Vettius,
Keep silence! No man further urge me!
I should not—cannot—will not court the people!
[*Goes out, followed by VETTIVS and POMPONIVS.*]

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Rome.*

Enter VETTIVS and POMPONIVS.

Pom. It was a false return. He had their votes,
Though he has lost his office. Lo you, now,
What strides they take that used to walk before
So circumspectly! Scarcely is he brought
Into a private state again, than they
Proceed to abrogate his laws. This blow,
If there it light, where it is meant it should,
Will not fall short a hair's breadth of his life.

Vet. You may be sure of it! To compass that
Opimius got the consulship.

Pom. This morning,
Caius and he met near the Capitol;
Flaccus held Caius by the arm;—Opimius,
On seeing him, makes a dead stand, and then,
With eyes fix'd on him thus, and folded arms,
He follows him right round, and cries to him,
“What, ho! you, Caius Gracchus, whither now?
What plot's on foot?” Then falls on him with such
A torrent of vile terms, as it would sting
The tamest looker-on to hear.

Vet. And how
Did Caius bear it?

Pom. Why, as one that, seeing
A tiger ready couch'd to spring upon him,
In quick avoidance finds security.
He pass'd in silence on. Opimius had
His Candiote troops with him. But where is Flaccus?

Vet. Gone to bring Caius to the Forum. How
Have you dispos'd our Latin friends?

Pom. About
The rostrum.

Vet. Fear not! If it comes to numbers,
Ours can tell theirs thrice over.

Enter LICINIUS.

Lic. Friends, well met!
Something's on foot that bodes not good to Caius.
I pass'd just now a group of senators:
One of them named him, and had farther spoken,
But that another placed, on seeing me,
His finger on his lip. You may be sure
They only want occasion to despatch him.

Vet. All Rome perceives it. Men inquire for him
As one whom mischief dogs: “Is Caius well?
When saw you him?—Does he go out to-day
To the Forum?”—half under breath, as fearing for
The answer. Others, as his friends pass by,
Lay heads together, and, with eyes glanced towards them,
Whisper with looks, portentous. Some do smile
That never smiled before on aught that loved him.
That's the worse sign! A smile from those that hate us,
Ensures some scowl of fate about to fall,
If not already lowering.

Pom. What's to be done?

Lic. Meet them with force.

Pom. Agreed!

Vet. Agreed!

Lic. Away, then!

If you have any friend as yet unpledged,
Change oaths with him.

Vet. When meet we in the Forum?

Lic. At the third hour—It is the hour of his fate!
If they repeal his laws, farewell to Rome! [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*An Apartment in Caius Gracchus's House*
—two chairs.

Enter CORNELIA and LICINIA.

Lici. You'll speak to him?

Cor. I will.

Lici. You'll urge him not

To go? You would not throw your richest gem
Away, though you might give't to one who knew
Its value, and would wear it?

Cor. I would not.

Lici. He's coming. [*Going.*] Mother!

Cor. I have said, *Licinia.* [*LICINIA goes out.*]

Yes; there's a point where virtue ought to stop—
Where she but loses labour. Ha! but is
Her labour ever lost? I can't debate
That question now; Nature won't let me. She's
Too strong, and I must play the humble part
She sets me. Had he not a wife and child—
He's here!

[*Retires.*]

Enter CAIUS GRACCHUS, without seeing his Mother.

Caius. I'll wrestle with him for, at least,
This throw! My laws! What! abrogate my laws!
Oh, insolence of tyranny! Well, well!
We are not so weak as let him. Were he twice
The consul, he shall not lay hands on them;
Yea, though our blood—

Cor. Caius, a word with you.
There's Fulvius Flaccus waiting at the door
With a whole crowd of citizens. Is't you, my son,
They want?

Caius. It is.

Cor. I know it is! My son,
Deal frankly with your mother. What's on foot?
I do not like that Flaccus: he's a man
Hath more ambition than integrity,
And zeal than wisdom. Is he of your counsels?

Caius. He is.

Cor. The sooner then you break with him
The better. Send him word you cannot come.

Caius. My word's already pledged to go with him
To the Forum.

Cor. On what errand, Caius Gracchus?
Is it about your laws, they would annul?
Mind, Caius, you're no longer tribune!

Caius. Fear not;
I shall be prudent.

Cor. [*Holding him.*] Stop, Caius! [*Taking his hand.*] I can
almost think you still

The boy that conn'd his lessons at my knee,
And I could rule in all his little moods
With but a look.—Ay, Caius; but a look
Of your mother's made you calm as sunshine, in
Your biggest storm! I would not lose you, Caius!
Caius, I would not lose you! Go not to
The Forum!

Caius. Mother—is it you!

Cor. Ay, son;

It is your mother,—that is all the mother
Whate'er she seems. I would be still a mother!
I would be left a son, my Caius!—Go not
To the Forum!

Caius. Wherefore, mother? What should I fear
From going to the Forum?

Cor. The Forum saw them shed your brother's blood!
Do I not know you, Caius? Can I not read you,
Without your tongue to help me? Does not his blood
Cry for revenge; and is your ear unapt
To hear it? Caius, that dear brother's death
Gives life to all thy acts! 'Twas that which pleaded
For Vettius—ask'd the tribuneship—revived
Tiberius's laws—defied the senate—made thee
Like a god to Rome, dealing out fate—and, now
Thou art no longer arm'd with thy great office,
Would lead thee forth to sacrifice! My son,
Go not to the Forum! 'Tis a worthless cause!
Why should you go, my Caius? To defend
Your laws from abrogation? Think of them
For whom you made those laws—the fickle people,
That lent a hand to pull you from your seat,
And raise up them, they shake at! Thou art single,—
Thou hast no seconds. 'Tis a hopeless struggle!
So sunk are all, the heart of public virtue
Has not the blood to make it beat again.

Caius. And should I therefore sink with the base times?

What, mother, what? Are the gods also base?

Is virtue base? Is honour sunk? Is manhood

A thing contemptible, not fit to be

Maintain'd? Remember you Messina, mother?

Once from its promontory we beheld

A galley in a storm; and, as the bark

Approach'd the fatal shore, could well discern

The features of the crew with horror all

Aghast, save one. Alone he strove to guide

The prow, erect amidst the horrid war

Of winds and waters raging. With one hand

He ruled the hopeless helm; the other strain'd

The fragment of a shiver'd sail; his brow
 The while bent proudly on the scowling surge,
 At which he scowl'd again. The vessel struck!
 One man alone bestrode the wave, and rode
 The foaming courser safe.—'Twas he, the same!
 You clasp'd your Caius in your arms, and cried,
 "Look, look, my son! the brave man ne'er despairs,
 And lives where cowards die!" I would but make
 Due profit of your lesson.

Cor. Caius—Caius!

Caius. Mother—I—

Cor. What, my son?

Caius. [*Sitting down.*] I'll please you, mother;
 I'll not go to the Forum.—I'll be ruled by you
 If you will. Let men say what they list of me.
 I care not if they whisper as I pass,
 And point, and smile, and say to one another,
 "Lo, the bold tribune, Gracchus! Lo, the man
 That lorded it o'er the senate!" What is't to me?
 I know I am your son, and would approve it
 If I might; but, since you will not have it so,
 I'll stay from the Forum, mother; I'll not go
 To the Forum.

Cor. Know the people you did promise
 To go?

Caius. Are they not here, with Fulvius Flaccus
 Expecting me? But let them go with *him*;
 He'll speak for them; he'll be their friend; he'll dare
 Oppose the senate; he'll preserve my laws,
 If he can. If there's no other man to speak
 For liberty, he'll do it! Pray you, mother,
 Send Lucius to them; tell them I'll not go
 Abroad to-day.

Cor. You must go to the Forum!

Caius. Not if you will it not.

Cor. I neither will it,
 Nor will it not.

Caius. Unless you bid me go,
 They go without me.

Cor. Why, I think, as it is,
 You cannot help but go. I know not what's
 The matter. 'Tis, perhaps, the fears of thy wife,
 Infect me; but I've dark forebodings, Caius.
 What will be left me, should I lose thee, son?

Caius. My monument!

Cor. Go to the Forum—go!
 You are Cornelia's son!

Caius. My only use
 Of life's to prove it!

Cor. Go—go—go! my Caius!

[*Going, but turns and embraces her son.—They go out severally.*]

SCENE III.—*A Square, with the Statue of Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus.*

Enter CAIUS GRACCHUS, TITUS, MARCUS, and Citizens.

Caius. What son of Rome may not his country call
To do her service? Romans, you desire
I should defend your laws from abrogation,
And I obey you.

Tit. Caius! worthy Caius!

Caius. Some coldness there has been between us; but
We know the cause, and so are friends again.
Our enemies may once prevail by craft,
But not a second time. Now show yourselves
The men you should be. If your liberties
And rights are dear to you, be faithful to them.
Fear not the senate; call upon the tribes;
Be freemen—none will dare to make you slaves!

Enter FLACCUS.

Fla. Caius, the consul is about to pass,
Proceeding to the sacrifice, which he
Has order'd, to give impious sanctity
To his designs against you.

Caius. Pray you, now,
My friends, observe good order. Let them pass.

[The Citizens retire.]

MUSIC.—*A Procession of Priests, &c., followed by OPIMIUS as Consul, attended by DRUSUS and Senators.*

Opi. *[Seeing GRACCHUS.]* What! Do you wait to interrupt
us here,—

You, Caius Gracchus, Fulvius, and the rest,
With your lewd rabble?

Caius. You may see, Opimius,
The way is clear for you.

Opi. Oh! is it so?

'Tis well, indeed, you give us leave to pass!
You're very humble now, good Caius Gracchus!
Drusus, is this the man that thought to ride
The necks of the senators? This the lawgiver,
That parcell'd out the lands of the patricians?
Why, yes! 'Tis Caius Gracchus!

Caius. True, Opimius;

'Tis even Caius Gracchus.

Opi. How! so humble?

What! This the gentleman that rail'd at us
The other day with such a fearless tongue?
Call'd us luxurious, proud—oppressors—tyrants,—
The common robbers of the state? This he?
What knave may not grow honest! Speak your soul, man!
Tell us you hate us,—spurn us, mock us, and

Revile us, as you were wont to do! I hate
The double villain. We are not the consul!
These are not lictors! Gracchus does not fear
To let us know his thoughts.

Caius. I will not stay
To give you plea of quarrel. Know, Opimius,
The man that loves his country may respect
The shadow of her greatness.

[*Goes out.*]

Opi. Ha!—Take heed!
Look to your safety! On to the sacrifice.

[*Music.—OPIMIUS and his party go out.*]

Fla. Is this to be endured? Could Caius brook it?
I have no blood of his within my veins,
And yet they boil!

Mar. Had he but spoke the word,
He should have been avenged. He rail'd at us,—
Let's follow him!

Tit. Hold, for the common cause!

Mar. The common cause were served by any hurt
That we could do Opimius. He's a tyrant!

Fla. The worst of tyrants!

Mar. Come, let's follow him, and rid our country of a tyrant!

Tit. Stay! How are we prepared for such a thing?
Remember, too, it is the time of sacrifice.

Fla. Caius was tame to bear it. See! he returns,
And chafing like a flood from its embankment
New burst!

Re-enter CAIUS GRACCHUS.

Caius. Endure a life on sufferance
Like this! Why, you must think me water, friends,
Or something farther still removed from blood—
If there's such poverty in nature—that
I seem to have no proper heat in me,
To keep cool veins under the force of that
Whose only sight, I see, sets yours a-boiling.

Tit. Here comes his lictor with the entrails.

Enter a Lictor, with the entrails.

Lictor. Way, there, evil citizens! [*Goes out.*]

Tit. Down with him! 'Tis an evil word for him.

Citizens. Down with him! [*TITUS and Citizens rush out.*]

Caius. Hold! hold! Come back, my friends—my country-
men!

You know not—

[*A loud groan without.*]

Re-enter TITUS, with a bloody dagger.

Tit. You are revenged! He's dead!

Caius. Blood shed! Blood is not wash'd away except
With blood! [*The Citizens return slowly and sullenly.*]
Why do you this? Why do you ever that
You should not do? Who bade you take my quarrel

Into your own hands? Who? I did not ask you
 For help or counsel. Gods! if I resolve
 To stake my life, may I not fix the game
 I throw't away on? Had I not here the tyrant
 Himself, within arm's reach,—that but a stride
 Like this, had made my weapon and his heart
 Acquainted? Had I not? If I did think
 A gust of spleen, a fit of temper, a
 Sour stomach, was a thing to pitch against
 The cause,—had I not man enough in me,
 Though thrice the number of his satellites
 Environ'd him, to smite him to my foot?
 And you must smite his slave! Now, look you, for
 That slave, the stones we tread on shall weep blood,
 And our veins lend the tears!

Fla. Remember, 'twas
 For you they did it.

Caius. Me? Oh! I retain
 The memory of all they have done for me!

Fla. Observe their looks: they are depress'd and spiritless
 From your rebuke. It is not well to bring
 Their zeal to such an ebb.

Caius. It is, indeed,
 The tide for ebbing. [*Thunder.*] Listen! Do you hear?

Tit. The heavens lower——

Caius. On us! There is something awful in their speech,
 More than the sound. [*Thunder again.*] That's anger!

Enter VETTIUS, hastily.

Vet. Disperse! disperse! The consul heavily
 Has ta'en his licitor's death. The senate is
 Convoked. [*Louder thunder, the Citizens withdraw slowly.*]

Caius. Now it speaks out. 'Tis not for naught
 They keep that stirring in the heavens. Some foot,
 On haste with wrath, hath from Jove's presence now
 Gone forth, the bearer of an errand, whose
 Dread import hath set all Olympus shaking!

Fla. You are infusing fear into the crowd:
 This is no way to remedy the evil.
 Think what can best be done.

Caius. Nothing is best,
 Where nothing can be done.

Fla. Here comes your brother.

Enter LICINIUS, hastily.

Lic. A decree has pass'd the senate, that the consul
 Look to the public safety. Caius, you,
 And Fulvius Flaccus, are the men they aim at;
 You must protect yourselves! [*Thunders still louder.*]

Fla. Observe, the citizens fall off from us.

Caius. Why, let them go! As long as our veins are full,
 Why should theirs flow? Let them fall off to one—

To none ! Their carrion would but poison Rome,
 And breed a mortal, general pestilence !
 Let them, I say ! It shall be writ in blood,
 The man who labours for the people's good,
 The people shall give up to sacrifice !
 So shall their groans unpitied rend their breasts,—
 Unheeded, save of them whose ears confess
 No sweeter music ! Here, even at the foot
 Of my great father's statue, I will brave
 The tyrant's wrath alone !

[Kneels at his father's statue, hiding his face with his hands.]

Fla. What ! hold your neck
 To the axe ?

Enter POMPONIUS, hastily.

Pom. Caius, the consul's lictors, I'm advised,
 Are on the watch for you.

Fla. Meet force with force !

[The Citizens return in larger numbers.]

The people throng to you again. 'Twas but
 The storm dispersed them. Not for yourself, alone,
 Consent to draw the sword, but for your friends,
 As well, proscribed along with you ; nor, yet,
 For them, but for your country, on whose neck
 The tyrant plants his foot ! Art thou the man
 To let her lie there, when no arm but thine
 Can lift her thence ? Look on the people !—See !
 They stretch their hands to thee ! A word, each hand
 Will grasp a weapon !

The People. Caius !

Caius. You prevail !

Against myself, I pledge myself. O Rome !
 The sons do love thee most, must help thy foes
 To shed thy blood ! To-morrow, friends ! to-morrow !

[They go out.]

SCENE IV.—*An Apartment in the House of Caius
 Gracchus—a couch.*

*Enter CORNELIA and LICINIA, with a scroll, followed by LUCIUS,
 carrying lights.*

Cor. Will not you go to bed ?

Lici. Not till he comes.

Cor. He must sup out.

Lici. Well, I'll sit up for him.

Cor. What, with those eyes, that look so ill prepared
 To play the watcher ?

Lici. I will read, Cornelia,
 And keep myself awake. I can't lie down ;
 Go you to bed, my mother.

Cor. I'll not give you
Excuse for so uncall'd-for labour, by
Partaking it. Good night!

Lici. Good night! [*CORNELIA goes out, followed by LUCIUS.*
I wish

He would come home! Why should he sup abroad

To-night? Most like, it is my brother's fault:

He never lets him rest with taking him

To Carbo's house—or Flaccus'—or some friends.

I would Licinius had a wife himself,

To keep him more at home. Cornelia's right;

I'm half-asleep already. A heavy lid

Is strange companion to an anxious heart!

Come, thou, that canst discourse without a tongue,—

Cunning beguiler of the lonely! talk to me,

And, for my dear lord, help me to keep watch!

*[She sits on the couch, and reads—grows gradually
drowsier—the scroll falls from her hand, and she
sleeps]*

Enter CAIUS GRACCHUS, without seeing her.

Caius. What meant the boy by starting when he let
Me in? What's in my face to make him hold

His breath, and change his colour at? I thought

At first the house was not my own; never, yet,

Felt it so like my own! A hundred objects,

Day after day I've pass'd, with just as much

Of consciousness as they had not been here,

I now distinguish with a feeling of

Such recognition, as invest them with

The worth of things most precious.—What! Licinia!

Asleep, too! She is sitting up for me!

Come, now, Conspiracy, thou bold redresser

Of grievance, doubly stak'st thy life!

Thou wilt achieve beneath the peaceful brows

Of household eaves, that never thought to see it,

What were done better in the ruthless eyes

Of frowning battlements—and lead along

The streets, where children, wives, and matrons tread,

Mars' revels, fitter to be acted on

Some far-removed, unfrequented waste,—

Come, now! and, while the silken bands of sleep

Hold thy unconscious, unoffending victim,

Look on, and scan thy plea of conjuration,

And see if it be proof! Thou canst not do it!

Already is the ague creeping o'er

Thy flesh, at longer trial of the test

Would shake the weapon from thy hand, though clench'd

With thousand oaths! That I should see her thus!

Lici. [*In her sleep.*] Keep him in, mother! Let him not go
forth!

They'll kill my Caius!

Caius. She is dreaming of me.

Lici. [*At first in her sleep, then awaking and rushing forward.*]

Oh, spare him! save him! give him to his wife!

Strike here—strike here! [*CAIUS catches her in his arms.*]

My Caius!—'Twas a dream!

But press me to thy heart; speak to me, Caius!

I know 'tis you, but press me—speak to me!

Oh! 'twas a fearful dream!

Cornelia. [*Entering.*] Who talks of dreams
At such an hour of night? Go, sleep and dream!

Lici. O, mother! such a dream!—And dreams are omens!

Cor. Omens, or not; dreams have precursors, well

As sequences! Your scared thoughts to-day

Were likely to give birth to pleasant dreams!

I marvel that you had one! One may dream,

Without the aid of sleep. You have been dreaming

E'er since you rose this morning; and the spectre

You saw with seal'd lids, just now, be sure

With open ones you started for yourself,—

And more than once before! Caius was out

All day—besieged with business that allow'd

No breathing-time. Look at him!—He's fatigued—

Worn out—wants rest! A seasonable time

To hold him, prating to him of a dream!

To bed, my son; for you must rise, I know,

Betimes. Licinia, if you love his health,

Don't waste the hour that's due to needful sleep,

And scant enough!—Away! Good night, Licinia!

Caius, to bed at once.—My son, good night!

[*LICINIA and CAIUS go out.*]

Good night, indeed! And is't my son whom, thus,

I bid good night, without a hope to see

The morning of his living face again?

He's pledged!—He has conspired! I took my measures

To gather note of all. No other course

Was left him. I'm content! Better my son

Die in confronting, than in bowing to,

The tyrant! But the chances?—There's no chance!

They'll fail him, as they fail'd Tiberius!

Though vain the struggle, yet 'tis fit 'twere made,

When bold injustice scoffs at laws, and 'gins

To ride it, rough-shod, o'er them! What's my son?

His noble name! that, scatheless, who shall dare

To call me motherless? A mother once,

Arming her son against his country's foes,

Gave him his shield, with charge to bring it back,

Or come back borne upon it. In my heart,

I feel two mothers, struggling! Was it thus

With her?—And, if it was, the nobler conquer'd;

And shall the weaker rule in Scipio's daughter?

My father answers, "No!"—Rome answers, "No!"

Cornelia, "No!" Caius is dead, [*CAIUS enters.*] but not

His name! His enemies may strike at that,
 But not a thousand blows could leave a scar!
 He sided with the weak and wrong'd,—resisted
 The wrongful and the strong,—in vain!—but, when
 His country fell, he fell along with her!

Caius. [Kneeling and catching CORNELIA's hand.] My mother!
Cor. [Bursting into a passion of tears.] Caius!—Oh! my son!
 my son! *[Curtain falls.]*

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Street before Caius's House—lamps at a distance.*

Citizens discovered lying asleep in various postures, armed—others watching.

Enter TITUS.

Tit. Almost the morning dawns. What! rouse ye, friends!
 Up, drowsy comrades, up! 'Tis time—'tis time! *[They rise.]*

Enter CAIUS GRACCHUS from the house.

Caius. Ha! is it time, my friends?

Tit. It is, good Caius.

Caius. What noise of steps is that?

Tit. A band of citizens,
 Crossing the end of the street.

Caius. Go on before, my friends; I'll follow you.

[TITUS and Citizens go out.]

I will but take a last look of the house.
 To think of what I leave within that house!
 I left her sleeping. Gods! upon the brink
 Of what a precipice!—and she must down,—
 I cannot save her. As I stole away,
 She breathed my name, withal, so plaintively,
 It tax'd my manhood not to turn again!
 'Tis done!—My thought must look another way!
 Tiberius—I am coming! Art thou here,
 My brother, waiting for me? Yes, I feel
 Thou art! I am ready! Mighty shade, lead on! *[Going.]*

Enter LICINIA, hastily.

Lici. [Rushing towards him.] Caius!—Oh! have I found you?

Caius. My Licinia,
 Why do you quit your bed?

Lici. To seek you, Caius.
To bring you back with me! Come into the house.

Caius. What fear you, love?

Lici. I know not what I fear,
But well I know that I have cause to fear!
Your putting off your journey yesterday—
Your going to the Forum, as you did—
Your making it so late ere you came back—
Your looks, I now recall, when you did come back—
Your rising now, at this unwonted hour,—
A thousand thousand things that I could name,
Had I the time to number them, forewarn me
You go not forth for good!

Caius. Licinia! wife!
Collect yourself, and listen. Be content
That I go forth, and may not be prevented.
Why, what's the matter with you? Can't a man
Get up a little hour or two, before
His wonted time, and take a walk, but he
Must run into a lion's mouth? For shame!
If this were told of Caius' wife! Go in;
Get thee to bed again; and take this kiss
Along with thee.

Lici. I cannot quit you, Caius,—
I cannot let you go! Spite of myself,
I cling to you as though it were a spell
That bound my arms around you. I am ill, love;
I'm very ill! in sooth, I am so ill,
It is not kind of you to leave me, Caius.

Caius, you would not leave me when I'm ill?
You surely never would! Let me lean on you,
And take me into the house. I thank you, Caius.

Caius. [*Conducting her to the door, and stopping.*] There!

Lici. Would you quit me at the threshold? Won't you
Come in, too? Do come in!—You will come in!
You can go forth by-and-by.

Caius. I must go forth
At once, love.

Lici. Must? In truth you must not—shall not!

Caius. [*Going.*] Farewell!

Lici. Stop, Caius—stop! [*Following him, catching hold of his robe, and discovering a sword under his arm.*] Is it to use
That sword you go abroad? Is it, my husband?
It is!—I see it all! You would go forth
To sell your life for an ungrateful people;
To quit your wife and child for cowards who
Look'd tamely on and saw your brother murder'd,
And now will play the craven game with you.
You trust the faith of men that have no faith
Except when trial is not near. My Caius!
My lord! my husband! father of my child!
Go not, but hear your poor distracted wife!

Caius. Licinia, now, is it perverse in you
To fancy danger. I have business forth.
Is it a time to walk the streets unarm'd,
When drunken revellers from breaking up
Of banquets are abroad? No more of this!
In—in! my love. Be sure I'll make all haste.
Thy thin robe suits not, Sweet, the morning air.
In, my Licinia, in! Dismiss your fears! [*Trumpet without.*
Lici. What's that? [*Trumpet again.*] Again! Speaks not
that summoner

To thee?

Caius. Dear wife—

Lici. Come into the house—come in!
If I'm thy wife, whose interest in thee
Shall push by mine? Whose claim to hold thy pledge
Calls on thee with a right that cancels mine?
Thou shalt not go! [*Trumpet.*

Caius. Licinia—

Lici. Nay, thou shalt not!

Caius. Let go my robe!

Lici. I will not let it go!

You hurt me, Caius!—Know you, you do hurt me?
For Juno's sake, dear husband! Caius—oh!
You gripe my wrist till I am sick with the pain!—
If any one had told it! Promise one thing,
And I will let thee go.

Caius. What is it?

Lici. Kill me!

Caius. [*Catching her to his breast.*] Licinia!

Lici. [*Nearly fainting in his arms.*] Ah!

Caius. Gods! I have killed thee!

Lici. No!

Or, if you have, 'tis with a sudden draught
Of too sweet life! Bless thee, my Caius—bless thee!
You will not go—you'll stay with me—you'll come with me—
You'll live for me! Come in! come in! come in!

Enter LICINIUS.

Lic. What keeps you, Caius?

Caius. [*Apart to him.*] Take her from about
My neck.

Lici. I hear you, Caius! There! Myself
Will do that kindness for thee. Thou art free
To go. Stay, husband! Give me from about
Thy neck that collar which thou wear'st, to keep it
As thy last gift.

Caius. Here, my Licinia.

Lici. What!

Nothing about me I can give thee in
Exchange for't? Oh! I have a token yet,
That hath the virtue of an amulet
To him that values it. I have been told,

Steel, at its sight, hath all as harmless turn'd
 As point of down, that cannot stand against
 The tender breath. Swear only, you will stay
 Until I fetch it. *[She goes out hurriedly.]*

Caius. Go!—I swear it, love!

Lic. Now Caius,
 Now is your time! wait not till she returns.

Caius. I have sworn to her.

Lic. And if you swore to her
 To pluck an eye out, would you think it kinder
 To do't than leave't undone? Away, at once!
 The cause—the cause!

Re-enter LICINIA, hastily, with her Child.

Lici. Thy boy, my Caius!

Caius. Ha!

Lici. Nay, if thou look'st so cold upon thy child,
 I'm satisfied no hope remains for me!

Caius. Now, was this kind?

Lici. I do not know that word.
 It stands for nothing—worse! 'tis found the thing
 It says it is not! Husbands are call'd kind,
 That break the foolish hearts which treasure them;
 And fathers, who make orphans of their children!
 And brothers, who are worse than bloodless strangers!
 And friends, whose actions prove them deadliest foes!
 More kind are foes that don't pretend they're kind! *[Kneels.]*

Lic. Come, Caius! Caius, come!

Caius. Why dost thou kneel?

Lici. To beg the gods for mercy on my child,
 Since thou hast none for him, nor yet for me!

Caius. Tear me away! More blessings light upon you
 Than I feel pangs, who curse the things I'd bless!

[CAIUS GRACCHUS and LICINIUS go out—alarums continue.]

Enter CORNELIA from the house, followed by LUCILLA and LUCIUS.

Cor. How's this? Licinia!

Lici. Take the child from me,
 Until I lay me down and die.

Cor. And die!

Rise, rise, my daughter!

Lici. Rather thou fall down
 Along with me, and pray the gods they send
 A thunderbolt to strike us both together!
 For both already they have smitten so,
 To spare is mocking mercy!

Cor. Rise!—Nay rise. *[Lifts LICINIA up.]*
 We may not tempt the gods! Come into the house,
 And show thy tears to it—'twon't tell upon thee.

This is the common street, and thou but lend'st
The essence of thy grief to vilest tongues,
Who will but jest at it. Come in! Come in!

Lici. You counsel me, and do not know the cause
Whereon you counsel me.

Cor. My son is dead?

Lici. No, no! Yet—

Cor. Yet! Why wouldst thou say he lives,
And but that little word 'twixt him and death?
He is the same as dead;—then think him dead,
As I do!

Lici. And art thou a mother?

Cor. Yes;

The mother of the virtue of my child!
The fashion of his body nature fix'd;—
I had no choice in't—was not ask'd how high
The stature on't should grow—gave not my voice
As to the shape of limb or lineament,
Nor pick'd the shade and texture of the skin;—
But, of his worth, the modelling was mine:
Say, that is dead, and he and I are dead!

Lici. I cannot answer this. I can but marvel,
The weight which bows me down should seem so light
To you. [*Alarums without.*

Enter LIVIA, hurriedly.

Livia. Cornelia!

Cor. What's to fear, Livia.

Livia. Those dreadful noises! Listen—you will hear
The rush of feet on every side. I've pass'd
Such groups of angry-looking men—some pale—
Some flush'd—some mute, and others muttering
To one another—hurrying all one way,
As all on one momentous object bent.
I came to thee, that we might seek some sanctuary;
For houses are not safe in times like these.

Cor. The Temple of Diana is at hand;
We shall go thither. See, my Livia,
How lost Licinia is! Take hold of her,
And lead the way. Nobly, ye gods! oh, nobly! [*They go out.*

SCENE II.—*Mount Aventine.*

*Enter groups of armed Citizens, CAIUS GRACCHUS, FULVIUS
FLACCUS, and LICINIUS.*

Caius. You see—you see! Their very trumpets shake
Your ranks. How will they stand the blows of those
Whose only breath can stagger?

Lic. What! No truce?

Fla. Twice have we offer'd terms of peace, which they

Have twice refused, and into prison cast
Our herald, my own son; and not content
With this, they have proclaim'd reward to him
Who brings your brother's head, its weight in gold!

Caius. Then shall they have it at a dearer price—
The safety of my friends!

Enter POMPONIUS.

Pom. Why stand you here?
Advance! A rumour spreads among our ranks,
That pardon is proclaim'd to those who quit us;
And many friends fall off.

Caius. It shall be so!
Call back the runaways, and let them save
The honour of their manhood! Husbands! drive out
Your sad foreboding thoughts; your wives shall hear
Your feet to-night upon the threshold. Sons!
Check not your pious tears, but let them flow
For joy; your mothers have not lost their props!
Cowards! relax not your strain'd sinews yet,
But live redoubted! Brave hearts! rein your courage,
To give it course upon a fairer field:
Caius alone shall bleed!

Vet. What mean you, Caius?

Caius. To yield myself into the consul's hands,
And save these veins their stores!

Vet. No, by the gods,
You shall not do it!

Caius. Not! Why should I live
At such a price as half these lives, which I
Can, singly dying, spare? I cannot live
To give my country freedom: let me die
To save her blood!

Enter VETTIUS.

Lic. What are your swords about?
Sheathe them or use them.

Caius. Friends, draw off our force;
I'll meet them singly!

Lic. Never!
We'll live or die together! Or, take your course,—
Yield yourself to the tyrant, if you will!
My sword is out, and shall not quit my grasp,
So long as it can strike a link away
From the vile chains that gall us! Leave us, Caius,—
Desert us—fly us—carry with thee half
Our strength! With the remaining half we'll struggle,
Nor vilely live the thralls of tyranny!

Caius. Oh, Rome, my country!—Oh, my mother Rome!
Is it to shed thy blood I use my sword?
'To fill thy matrons' and thy daughters' eyes

With tears, and drain the spirits of thy sons?
 Should I not rather turn it 'gainst myself,
 And, by the timely sacrifice of one,
 Preserve the many? They will not let me do it;
 They take from me the rule of mine own acts,
 And make me Freedom's slave! What! is it so?
 Come, then, the only virtue that is left me,—
 The fatal virtue of necessity.
 Upon them!
 Give them stout hearts, ye gods! to enable them
 To stand the flashing of their tyrants' swords!
 Deaf to the din of battle let them be!
 Senseless to wounds, and without eyes for blood;
 That, for this once, they may belie themselves;
 Make tyranny to cower, and, from her yoke,
 Lift prostrate Liberty, to fall no more. [They go out.]

SCENE III.—*The Interior of the Temple of Diana—the Statue
 of the Goddess—a large Portal.*

LICINIA, *kneeling by the Statue*—CORNELIA, LIVIA, LUCILLA
(with Gracchus's Child), LUCIUS, and numerous Females, who
had fled for safety to the Temple, discovered.

Cor. [To LUCIUS.] Go, boy; look out, and tell me what thou
 see'st.

If all is quiet, run to the end of the street;
 But venture not beyond—and listen if
 Thou hear'st the sound of tumult. Use thy senses,
 And hurry back; and, mind, keep bounds. [LUCIUS goes out.]

Livia. [To one of the Females.] Observe
 Cornelia! Now what kind of soul is hers
 That in this hour of trembling can be calm,
 As nought but common things were passing round her?
 But note her!

Cor. Livia, you did say just now,
 Your brother told you there had come a herald
 Proposing terms of peace.

Livia. He did; but thought
 They would not be accepted.

Cor. He thought right;
 No more they will. Opimius hath the gust
 Too strong for blood, when he hath snuff'd it, not
 To taste. He'll lap it: matters not whose veins
 'Twill cost the emptying of, so they belong
 To honest men. Then will he offer sacrifice!
 Oh, man! man! man!—most sacrilegious and
 Profane!—that, with thy lips, dost laud the gods,

Whose ordinance thou tearest with thy hands!
 The path to whom thou hast so thick beset
 With peril, he who seeks may find it out
 By many a grave which marks the spot, whereon
 The truly noble fell! Why clasp you me,
 My Livia?

Livia. Do you hear the clash of swords?

Cor. Indeed I do not. 'Tis your fancy, Livia.

Livia. Nay, 'tis your talking of men's graves.

Cor. Men's graves

Are but men's beds; whereon we lay them, not
 For one hard day of toil to follow on
 Another! Thankless labour, Livia—sweat,
 To him expends it profitless—that goes
 To nourish others, and they take, as though
 The using were a boon! How fares it with
 Licinia?

Livia. All abstracted, as she were
 Alive to naught without her. I can draw
 No word nor sign from her. There kneels she to
 The statue of the goddess, mute as silence,
 And in so fix'd a stillness, you might ask,
 Which is the marble?

A Soldier. [Without.] Way, there! Let me in!

Cor. Open the gates, and let him in.

Livia. Who is it?

Cor. One is wounded from the fray. 'Tis going on!
 I fear that Lucius has gone nearer to it
 Than I commanded.

Livia. And thou hast a son
 Is in it.

Cor. Livia! Livia! I'm a mother
 Although I do not wait to let you know it!

Re-enter LUCIUS.

Now, sir, where have you been? Your face is flush'd;
 Finely you've mark'd my orders! Tell me what
 You've seen and heard?

Luc. The battle is begun.

Cor. I know it already. Can you tell which side
 Is like to win?

Luc. The citizens, they say,
 Give ground.

Livia. They do!

Cor. I could have told it you,
 Without the aid of augury. How learn'd
 You this?

Luc. From some that carried to his house
 The young Valerius, wounded mortally.

Cor. That's right; you speak not out of breath, as though
 The house were on fire. Valerius, say you?

Luc. Yes.

I scarcely knew him as they bore him by,
His face so gash'd.

Livia. Oh!

Cor. Hear you, sir! Now know
Yourself a man! You have been nearer to
The fray than you like to tell. You're a fine boy!
What rush of feet is that? Go see.

[*LUCIUS goes out and returns.*]

Luc. The citizens

Fly every way; and from the windows and
The houses' top, the women look and wring
Their hands, and wail, and clamour. Listen! you
Will hear them.

Cor. I can hear them without ears.

Caius Gracchus. [*Without.*] Shut to the gates!

[*LUCIUS goes out.*]

Lici. [*Starting up.*] 'Tis Caius!

Caius. [*Without.*] Thankless hearts!
Not one presents himself to aid my sword,
Or lend a charger to assist my flight;
But as I were a racer in the games,
They cry "Make haste!" and shout as I pass by!

Enter CAIUS GRACCHUS.

May they remain the abject things they are,
Begging their daily pittance from the hands
Of tyrant lords that spurn them! May they crawl
Ever in bondage and in misery,
And never know the blessed rights of freemen!
Here will I perish!

Lici. [*Rushing to him.*] Caius!

Caius. My Licinia!
My mother, too!—My child, too!

Enter VETTIVS.

Vet. Caius here!

Alas! my friend, you are lost! Pomponius and
Licinius, striving to keep back the consul,
And give you time for flight, have fallen beneath
His hirelings' blows. They have the scent of you:
Another minute, they're upon you!

Cor. Caius, embrace me!
The gods do bare no sword 'gainst virtue!

Caius. No!

My mother! My Licinia! give me my child.
[*Aside to CORNELIA.*] Mother, be you a parent to my wife,
A tutor to my boy. The lessons you
Did make me con, teach him—none else; he cannot
Learn better. [*Places the child in CORNELIA'S arms.*] My
Licinia, pardon me! [*Embraces her.*]

Cor. She scarcely heeds thee! Son, what feel you for
Beneath your cloak?

Caius. Nothing, will hurt me, mother;
But only balk our tyrants. Rome! O Rome!

[*A dagger drops from beneath CAIUS's robe—he falls dead—LICINIA, shrieking, throws herself on the body—CORNELIA, with difficulty, supports herself—the Consul and his troops are heard approaching—she makes a violent effort to recover her self-possession. Enter OPIMIUS and his party, with Guards, Lictors, &c. CORNELIA holds up the child in one hand, and with the other points to the body of CAIUS—OPIMIUS and the rest stand fixed in amazement—Flourish, and the curtain falls.*]

END OF CAIUS GRACCHUS.

VIRGINIUS:

A Tragedy.

DEDICATED TO WILLIAM MACREADY, ESQ.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN IN 1820.)

<i>Appius Claudius</i> ..	} Decemvirs	{ Mr. ABBOT.
<i>Spurius Oppius</i>		{ Mr. WHITE.
<i>Vibulanus</i>		{ Mr. JEFFERIES.
<i>Honorius</i>	} Patricians	{ Mr. NORRIS.
<i>Valerius</i>		{ Mr. VEDY.
<i>Caius Claudius</i>	} Clients to Appius ..	{ Mr. CONNOR.
<i>Marcus</i>		{ Mr. CLAREMONT.
<i>Dentatus</i>	A Veteran	Mr. TERRY.
<i>Virginus</i>	A Centurion	Mr. MACREADY.
<i>Numitorius</i>	His Brother-in-law .	Mr. EGERTON.
<i> Icilius</i>	In love with Virginia	Mr. C. KEMBLE.
<i>Lucius</i>	Brother of Icilius ..	Mr. COMER.
<i>Publius</i>	} Soldiers	{ Mr. MEARS.
<i>Decius</i>		{ Mr. TREBY.
<i>Sextus</i>		{ Mr. CRUMPTON.
<i>Titus</i>	} Citizens	{ Mr. FAUCIT.
<i>Servius</i>		{ Mr. ATKINS.
<i>Cneius</i>		{ Mr. KING.
<i>Virginia</i>	{ Daughter of Virgi- nius.....	{ Miss FOOTE.
<i>Servia</i>	Her Nurse.....	Mrs. FAUCIT.
<i>Female Slave</i> ....	.....	Mrs. CHIPP.

Citizens (male and female), Soldiers, Lictors, &c.

SCENE, CHIEFLY ROME.

PROLOGUE,
BY J. H. REYNOLDS, ESQ.

SPOKEN BY MISS BOOTH.

[*Speaking behind.*] Nay, Mr. Fawcett, give me leave, I pray :
The audience wait, and I must have my way. [*Enters.*
What ! curb a woman's tongue !—as I'm alive,
The wretch would mar our old prerogative !
Ladies ! by very dint of pertinacity,
Have I preserved the glory of loquacity.

Oh ! could you gaze, as I am gazing now,
And see each man behind with gather'd brow,
And clenched hand (though nought my spirit damps),
Beckoning, with threats, my presence from the lamps :
Each, as I broke my way, declared how well
His art could woo you—to be peaceable !
One is well robed—a second greatly shines,
In the nice balance—of *cast-iron* lines ;
A third can sing—a fourth can touch your tears—
A fifth—"I'll see no more !"—a fifth appears,
Who hath been once in Italy, and seen Rome ;
In short—there's quite a hubbub in the Green-Room.
But I—a very woman—careless, light—
Fleet idly to your presence, this fair night ;
And, craving your sweet pardon, fain would say
A kind word for the poet and his play.

To-night, no idle nondescript lays waste
The fairy and yet placid bower of taste :
No story, piled with dark and cumbrous fate,
And words, that stagger under their own weight ;
But one of silent grandeur—simply said,
As though it were awoken'd from the dead !
It is a tale—made beautiful by years ;—
Of pure, old Roman sorrow—old in tears !
And those you shed o'er it in childhood may
Still fall—and fall—for sweet Virginia !

Nor doth a crownéd poet of the age
Call the sweet spirits from the historic page !
No old familiar dramatist hath spun
This tragic, antique web, to-night—but one,
An unknown author, in a sister land,
Waits, in young fear, the fiat of your hand.

VIRGINIUS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Rome.*

Enter SERVIUS and CNEIUS.

Ser. Carbo denied a hearing!

Cne. Ay, and Marcellus cast into prison, because he sued a friend of one of the decemvirs for a sum of money he had lent him.

Ser. And Appius resisted not? Appius, that in the first decemvirate was a god to the people!

Cne. Resisted not! Nay, was most loud in favour of the decree; but hither comes Virginius, who interested himself so much in Carbo's affair. He looks a little heated! Is not that Titus he is speaking to? Stand aside, master, and listen.

Enter VIRGINIUS and TITUS.

Virginius. Why did you make him decemvir, and first decemvir too?

Tit. We had tried him, and found him honest.

Virginius. And could you not have remained content? Why try him again to find him dishonest? Knew ye not he was a patrician, and of the Claudian family?

Tit. He laid down the consulate—

Virginius. Ha! ha! ha!—to be elected into the decemvirate, and he was so; and he laid down his office of decemvir to be re-elected into the decemvirate, and he is so; ay, by Jupiter! and to the exclusion of his late colleagues! Did not Titus Genutius lay down the consulate?

Tit. He did.

Virginius. Was he not next to Appius in the decemvirate?

Tit. He was.

Virginius. Did you not find him honest?

Tit. We did find him honest.

Virginius. As honest as Appius Claudius?

Tit. Quite as honest.

Virginius. Quite as honest!—and why not re-elect him decemvir? Most sapient people! You re-elect Appius into the decemvirate for his honesty, and you thrust Titus out of the decemvirate—I suppose for his honesty also! Why, Appius was sick of the decemvirate.

Ser. I never heard him say so.

Virgilius. But he did say so—say so in my hearing; in presence of the senators Valerius and Caius Claudius, and I don't know how many others. 'Twas known to the whole body of the senate—not that he was sick, but that he said so. Yes, yes; he and his colleagues, he said, had done the work of the republic for a whole year, and it was now but just to grant them a little repose, and appoint others to succeed them.

Tit. Well, well, we can only say he changed his mind.

Virgilius. No, no, we needn't say that neither! As he had laboured in the decemvirate, perhaps he thought he might as well repose in the decemvirate.

Tit. I know not what he thought. He is decemvir, and we made him so, and cannot help ourselves. Fare you well, Virgilius. Come, let's to the Forum.

[*TITUS, SERVIUS, and CNEIUS go out.*]

Virgilius. You cannot help yourselves! Indeed you cannot: You help'd to put your masters on your backs:

They like their seat, and make you show your paces.

They ride you—sweat you—curb you—lash you—and

You cannot throw them off with all your mettle!

But here comes one, whose share in giving you

To such unsparing riders, touches me

More nearly, for that I've an interest

In proving him a man of fair and most

Erect integrity. Good day, Icilius.

Enter ICILIUS.

Icil. Worthy Virgilius! 'tis an evil day

For Rome, that gives her more convincing proof,

The thing, she took for hope, is but a base

And wretched counterfeit! Our new decemvirs

Are anything but friends to justice and

Their country.

Virgilius. You, Icilius, had a hand

In their election. You applied to me

To aid you with my vote in the comitia:

I told you then, and tell you, now, again,

I am not pleased when a patrician bends

His head to a plebeian's girdle. Mark me!

I'd rather he should stand aloof, and wear

His shoulder high—especially the nephew

Of Caius Claudius.

Icil. I would have pledged my life—

Virgilius. 'Twas a high gage, and men have staked a higher

On grounds as poor as yours—their honour, boy!

Icilius, I have heard it all—your plans—

The understanding 'twixt the heads of the people—

Of whom, Icilius, you are reckon'd one, and

Worthily—and Appius Claudius—all!—

'Twas every jot disclosed to me.

Icil. By whom?

Virgilius. Siccus Dentatus.

Icil. He disclosed it to you?

Siccius Dentatus is a crabbéd man.

Virginus. Siccius Dentatus is an honest man!

There's not a worthier in Rome! How now!

Has he deceived me? Do you call him liar?

My friend! my comrade! honest Siccius,

That fought in six-score battles!

Icil. Good Virginus,

Siccius Dentatus is my friend—the friend

Of every honest man in Rome—a brave man—

A most brave man. Except yourself, Virginus,

I do not know the man I prize above

Siccius Dentatus—yet he's a crabbéd man.

Virginus. Yes, yes; he is a crabbéd man.

Icil. A man

Who loves too much to wear a jealous eye

Virginus. No, not a whit, where he sees double dealing.

You are the best judge of your own concerns;

Yet, if it please you to communicate

With me upon this subject, come and see me.

I told you, boy, I favour'd not this stealing

And winding into place. What he deserves,

An honest man dares challenge 'gainst the world—

But come and see me. Appius Claudius, chosen

Decemvir, and his former colleagues, that

Were quite as honest as himself, not chosen—

No, not so much as named by him, who named

Himself, and his new associates! Well, 'tis true,

Dog fights with dog, but honesty is not

A cur, that baits his fellow—and e'en dogs,

By habit of companionship, abide

In terms of faith and cordiality—

But come and see me.

Icil. Appius comes!

The people still throng after him with shouts,

Unwilling to believe their Jupiter

Has mark'd them for his thunder. Will you stay,

And see the homage that they render him?

Virginus. Not I! Stay you; and, as you made him,
hail him;

And shout, and wave your hand, and cry, "Long live

Our first and last decemvir, Appius Claudius!"

For he is first and last, and every one!

Rome owes you much, Icilius—Fare you well—

I shall be glad to see you at my house. [VIRGINIUS goes out.]

Enter APPIUS CLAUDIUS, SICCIIUS DENTATUS, LUCIUS,
TITUS, SERVIUS, MARCUS, and Citizens, shouting.

Tit. Long live our first decemvir!

Long live Appius Claudius!

Most noble Appius! Appius and the decemvirate for ever!

[Citizens shout.]

App. My countrymen and fellow-citizens,
We shall deserve your favour.

Tit. You have deserved it,
And will deserve it.

App. For that end we named
Ourselves decemvir.

Tit. You could not have named a better man.

Den. For his own purpose (*Aside*).

App. Be assured, we hold
Our power but for your good. Your gift it was :
And gifts make surest debtors. Fare you well—
And, for your salutations, pardon me
If I repay you only with an echo—
Long live the worthy citizens of Rome!

[*APPIUS and friends go out.*]

Den. That was a very pretty echo!—a most soft echo. I never thought your voices were half so sweet! A most melodious echo! I'd have you ever after make your music before the patricians' palaces. They give most exquisite responses!—especially that of Appius Claudius! A most delicate echo!

Tit. What means Dentatus?

Ser. He's ever carping—nothing pleases him.

Den. Oh! yes—you please me—please me mightily, I assure you.—You are noble legislators, take most especial care of your own interests, bestow your votes most wisely too—on him who has the wit to get you into the humour; and, withal, have most musical voices—most musical—if one may judge by their echo.

Tit. Why, what quarrel have you with our choice? Could we have chosen better?—I say they are ten honest decemvirs we have chosen.

Den. I pray you name them me.

Tit. There's Appius Claudius, first decemvir—

Den. Ay, call him the head. You are right. Appius Claudius, the head. Go on!

Tit. And Quintus Fabius Vibulanus—

Den. The body, that eats and drinks while the head thinks. Call him Appius's stomach. Fill him, and keep him from cold and indigestion, and he'll never give Appius the headache! Well?—There's excellent comfort in having a good stomach!—Well?

Tit. There's Cornelius, Marcus Servilius, Minucius, and Titus Antonius—

Den. Arms, legs, and thighs!

Tit. And Marcus Rabuleius—

Den. He'll do for a hand, and, as he's a senator, we'll call him the right-hand. We couldn't do less, you know, for a senator! Well?

Luc. At least, you'll say we did well in electing Quintus Petilius, Caius Duellius, and Spurius Oppius—men of our order!—sound men!—known sticklers for the people.—At least you'll say we did well in that!

Den. And who dares say otherwise? "Well!" one might as well say "ill" as "well." "Well" is the very skirt of commendation; next neighbour to that mire and gutter, "ill." "Well" indeed! you acted like yourselves. Nay, e'en yourselves could not have acted better. Why, had you not elected them, Appius would have gone without his left hand, and each of his two feet!

Ser. Out! you are dishonest!

Den. Ha!

Ser. What would content you?

Den. A post in a hot battle. Out, you cur! Do you talk to me?

Citizen (from behind). Down with him, he does nothing but insult the people.

[*The crowd approach DENTATUS, threateningly.*]

Icil. [*Entering.*] Stand back! Who is't that says down with Siccus Dentatus? Down with him! 'Tis what the enemy could never do; and shall we do it for them? Who uttered that dishonest word? Who uttered it, I say? Let him answer a fitter, though less worthy, mate—Lucius Icilius.

Citizen. Stand back, and hear Icilius.

Icil. What! haven't I voted for the decemvirs, and do I snarl at his jests? Has he not a right to jest? the good, honest Siccus Dentatus, that, alone, at the head of the veterans, vanquished the Æqui for you. Has he not a right to jest? For shame!—Get to your houses! The worthy Dentatus! Cheer for him, if you are Romans! Cheer for him before you go! Cheer for him, I say! [*Citizens go out, shouting.*]

Den. And now, what thanks do you expect from me, Icilius?

Icil. None.

Den. By Jupiter, young man, had you thus stepped before me in the heat of battle, I should have cloven you down—but I'm obliged to you, Icilius—and hark you! There's a piece of furniture in the house of a friend of mine, that's called Virginius, I think you've set your heart upon—dainty enough; yet not amiss for a young man to covet. Ne'er lose your hopes! He may be brought into the mind to part with it. As to these curs, I question which I value less, their fawnings or their snarlings. I thank you, boy! Do you walk this way? I am glad of it. Come! 'Tis a noble decemvirate you have chosen for us! Come! [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*Virginius's House.*

Enter VIRGINIUS and SERVIA.

Virginius. And is this all you have observed? I think There's nothing strange in that. An L and an I Twined with a V. Three very innocent letters To have bred such mischief in thy brain, good Servia. Come, read this riddle to me.

Servia. You may laugh,
 Virginius; but I'll read the riddle right.
 The L doth stand for Lucius; and the I,
 Icilius; which, I take it, will compose,
 "Lucius Icilius."

Virginius. So it will, good *Servia*.

Servia. Then, for the V; why, that is plain, "*Virginia*."

Virginius. And now, what conjuration find you here?

Servia. What should I find, but love? The maid's in love;
 In love, and it is with Icilius. Look, the wreath
 Is made of roses, that entwines the letters.

Virginius. And this is all?

Servia. And is it not enough?

You'll find this figuring where'er you look:
 There's not a piece of dainty work she does—
 Embroidery, or painting—not a task
 She finishes, but on the skirt, or border,
 In needle-work, or pencil, this, her secret,
 The silly wench betrays.

Virginius. Go, send her to me—
 Stay! Have you spoken to her of it?

Servia. I!

Not I, indeed; I left that task to you—
 Though once I ask'd her what the letters meant.
 She laugh'd, and drew a scratch across them; but
 Had scarce done so, ere her fair visage fell,
 For grief that she had spoil'd the ciphers—and
 A sigh came out, and then almost a tear;
 And then she look'd as piteous on the harm
 That she had done, as she had done it to
 A thing had sense to feel it. Never after
 She let me note her at her work again.
 She had good reason!

Virginius. Send her to me, *Servia*.

[*SERVIA goes out.*]

There's something here, that promises to bring me
 Anticipation of my wish. I think
 Icilius loves my daughter—nay, I know it;
 And such a man would challenge for her husband;—
 And only waited, till her forward spring
 Put on, a little more, the genial likeness
 Of colouring into summer, ere I sought
 To nurse a flower, which, blossoming too early,
 Too early often dies; but if it springs
 Spontaneous, and, unlook'd for, woos our hand
 To tend and cherish it, the growth is healthful;
 And 'twere untimely, as unkind, to check it.
 I'll ascertain it shortly—soft, she comes.

Enter VIRGINIA.

Virginia. Well, father, what's your will?

Virginius. I wish'd to see you,
 To ask you of your tasks—how they go on—

And what your masters say of you—what last
You did. I hope you never play
The truant?

Virginia. The truant! No, indeed, Virginius.

Virginius. I am sure you do not—kiss me!

Virginia. O my father!

I am so happy when you're kind to me!

Virginius. You are so happy when I'm kind to you!

Am I not always kind? I never spoke

An angry word to you in all my life,

Virginia! You are happy when I'm kind!

That's strange; and makes me think you have some reason

To fear I may be otherwise than kind—

Is't so, my girl?

Virginia. Indeed, I did not know

What I was saying to you!

Virginius. Why, that's worse

And worse! What! when you said your father's kindness

Made you so happy, am I to believe

You were not thinking of him?

Virginia. I——

[*Greatly confused.*]

Virginius. Go fetch me

The latest task you did.

[*VIRGINIA goes out.*]

It is enough.

Her artless speech, like crystal, shows the thing

'Twould hide, but only covers. 'Tis enough!

She loves, and fears her father may condemn!

Virginia. [*Re-entering with a painting.*] Here, Sir.

Virginius. What's this?

Virginia. 'Tis Homer's story, father,
Of brave Achilles parting from Briseis.

Virginius. You have done it well. The colouring is good,
The figures well design'd. 'Tis very well!—

Whose face is this you've given to Achilles?

Virginia. Whose face?

Virginius. I've seen this face! Tut! tut! I know it
As well as I do my own, yet can't bethink me
Whose face it is!

Virginia. You mean Achilles' face?

Virginius. Did I not say so! 'Tis the very face
Of—No! no! Not of him. There's too much youth
And comeliness, and too much fire, to suit
The face of Siccus Dentatus.

Virginia. Oh!

You surely never took it for his face!

Virginius. Why, no; for now I look again, I'd swear
You lost the copy, ere you drew the head;
And, to requite Achilles for the want
Of his own face, contrived to borrow one
From Lucius Icilius. [*Enter DENTATUS.*] My Dentatus,
I am glad to see you!

Den. 'Tis not for my news, then.

Virginius. Your news! What news?

Den. More violence and wrong from these new masters of ours—our noble decemvirs—these demi-gods of the good people of Rome! No man's property is safe from them. Nay, it appears we hold our wives and daughters but by the tenure of their will. Their liking is the law. The senators themselves, scared at their audacious rule, withdraw themselves to their villas, and leave us to our fate. There are rumours, also, of new incursions by the Sabines.

Virginius. Rome never saw such days!

Den. And she'll see worse, unless I fail in my reckoning. Is that Virginia? I saw her not before. How does the fair Virginia? Why, she is quite a woman. I was just now wishing for a daughter.

Virginius. A plague, you mean.

Den. I am sure you should not say so.

Virginia. Indeed he should not; and he does not say so, Dentatus—not that I am not a plague, But that he does not think me one, for all I do to weary him. I am sure, Dentatus, If to be thought to do well is to do well, There's nothing I do ill; but it is far From that! for few things do I as I ought— Yet everything is well done with my father, Dentatus.

Virginius. That's well done, is it not, my friend? [*Aside.* But if you had a daughter, what would you do with her?

Den. I'd give her to Icilius. I should have been just now torn to pieces, but for his good offices. The gentle citizens—that are driven about by the decemvirs' lictors, like a herd of tame oxen, and, with most beast-like docility, only low applauses to them in return—would have done me the kindness to knock my brains out; but the noble Icilius bearded them singly, and railed them into temper. Had I a daughter worthy of such a husband, he should have such a wife, and a patrician's dower along with her.

Virginius. I wish to speak with you, Dentatus. Icilius is a young man, whom I honour; but so far only as his conduct gives me warrant. He has had, as thou knowest, a principal hand in helping us to our decemvirs. It may be that he is what I would gladly think him; but I must see him clearly, clearly, Dentatus. If he has acted with the remotest understanding, touching the views of these new tyrants, that we are cursed withal, I disclaim him as my friend! I cast him off for ever!

[*VIRGINIUS and DENTATUS go out.*]

Virginia. How is it with my heart? I feel as one

That has lost everything, and just before

Had nothing left to wish for! He will cast

Icilius off!—I never told it yet;

But take of me, thou gentle air, the secret—

And ever after breathe more balmy sweet—

I love Icilius! Yes, although to thee

I fear to tell it, that hast neither eye
 To scan my looks, nor voice to echo me,
 Nor e'en an o'er-apt ear to catch my words;
 Yet, sweet invisible confidant, my secret
 Once being thine—I tell thee, and I'll tell thee
 Again—and yet again. I love Icilius!
 He'll cast Icilius off!—not if Icilius
 Approve his honour. That he's sure to do;
 He speaks, and looks, and moves a thing of honour,
 Or honour never yet spoke, look'd, or moved,
 Or was a thing of earth! O come, Icilius!
 Do but appear, and thou art vindicated.

ICILIUS, entering.

Virginia! sweet Virginia! Sure I heard
 My name pronounced. Was it by thee, Virginia?
 Thou dost not answer! Then it *was* by thee—
 O! wouldst thou tell me why thou namedst Icilius!

Virginia. My father is incensed with thee. Dentatus
 Has told him of the new decemvirate,
 How they abuse their office. You, he knows,
 Have favour'd their election, and he fears
 May have some understanding of their plans.

Icil. He wrongs me then!

Virginia. I thank the gods!

Icil. For me!

Virginia? Do you thank the gods for me?
 Your eye is moist—yet that may be for pity.
 Your hand doth tremble—that may be for fear;
 Your cheek is cover'd o'er with blushes! What,
 O what can that be for?

Virginia. Icilius, leave me!

Icil. Leave thee, Virginia! O, a word—a word
 Trembles upon my tongue, which, if it match
 The thought that moves thee, now, and thou wilt let me
 Pronounce that word, to speak that thought for thee,
 I'll breathe, though I expire in the ecstasy
 Of uttering it.

Virginia. Icilius, will you leave me?

Icil. Love! Love! Virginia! Love!—If I have spoken
 Thy thought aright, ne'er be it said again,
 The heart requires more service than the tongue
 Can, at its best, perform. My tongue hath served
 Two hearts—but lest it should o'erboast itself,
 Two hearts with but one thought! Virginia!
 Virginia, speak! *[VIRGINIA covers her face with her hands.*

O, I have loved thee long;

So much the more ecstatic my delight,
 To find thee mine at length.

Virginia. My secret's yours.
 Keep it and honour it, Icilius.

Enter VIRGINIUS and DENTATUS behind.

Virginus. Icilius here!

Virginia. I ask thee now to leave me!

Icil. Leave thee! who leaves a treasure he has coveted
So long, and found so newly, ere he scans it
Again, and yet again; and asks and answers,
Repeats and answers, answers and repeats,
The half-mistrustful half-assured question—
And is it mine, indeed?

Virginia. Indeed! indeed!
Now leave me!

Icil. I must see thy father first,
And lay my soul before him.

Virginia. Not to-night!

Icil. Now worse than ever, dear Virginia!
Can I endure his doubts; I'll lay my soul
Naked before him—win his friendship quite,
Or lose myself for ever. [*Going, is met by VIRGINIUS.*

Virginus. Stop, Icilius!
Thou seest that hand? It is a Roman's, boy;
'Tis sworn to liberty—It is the friend
Of honour. Dost thou think so?

Icil. Do I think Virginus owns that hand!

Virginus. Then you'll believe
It has an oath deadly to tyranny,
And is the foe of falsehood! By the gods,
Knew it the lurking-place of treason, though
It were a brother's heart, 'twould drag the caitiff
Forth. Darest thou take that hand?

Icil. I dare, Virginus.

Virginus. Then take it! Is it weak in thy embrace?
Returns it not thy gripe? Thou wilt not hold
Faster by it than it will hold by thee!
I overheard thee say, thou wast resolved
To win my friendship quite—Thou canst not win
What's thine already! You will stay, my boy,
And sup with us to-night?

Den. To be sure he will!

Virginus. And, hark you, Sir,
At your convenient time, appoint a day
Your friends and kinsmen may confer with me—
There is a bargain I would strike with you.
Come, to the supper-room. Do you wait for me
To lead Virginia in, or will you do it?
Come on, I say; come on. Your hand, Dentatus.

[*They go out.*

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Street.**Enter* PUBLIUS *and* SEXTUS.*Pub.* This way! We muster at the Flaminian gate.*Sext.* Shall we not wait for Decius?*Pub.* No; were he ten times Decius.—They'll have already begun their march. Come on!*Enter* NUMITORIUS.*Num.* Do you belong to the fourth legion?*Pub.* We do.*Num.* They are upon their march, then?*Pub.* I told you so—Come on! come on! [*Soldiers go out.*]*Enter* LUCIUS.*Luc.* Numitorius, what soldiers were those that just now parted from you?*Num.* Soldiers hastening to overtake the army, that's now upon its march.*Luc.* 'Tis all confirmed, then; the Sabines are in force upon our borders.*Num.* I pray you tell me something new! Know you not that the senate has met, and that the decemvirs have come off triumphant, in spite of all opposition?*Luc.* Should they have been opposed in such a strait as this?*Num.* Ay, should they! They dared not have armed a single citizen without the order of the senate; which, had they not obtained, the country would have been left naked to the foe; and, then, they had been forced to make room for more popular magistrates.*Luc.* Why were they not opposed, then?*Num.* Did not I tell you they *were* opposed? Caius Claudius, Appius's own uncle, and Honorius, that noble senator, opposed them; and it was like to go against them, but for the brawling insolence of Spurius Oppius, and the effrontery of the head decemvir, backed by the young patricians.*Luc.* So they are empowered to take up arms?*Num.* To be sure they are; and they have done so. One body has already marched, and by this time, no doubt, has come to blows with the enemy. The levy is still proceeding. All the decemvirs, but Appius, take the field. He remains in Rome to keep good order, that is the violator of all order. Why, where have you been, Lucius, to have felt no movement of so great and wide a stir? Your brother meets Virginius at his house to-day. Come with me thither, for you I know are bid. Lucius, there's no huzzaing for your decemvirs now. Come on! 'Tis close upon the hour. [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*Virginus's House.*

Enter VIRGINIUS, ICILIUS, NUMITORIUS, LUCIUS, and others.

Virginus. Welcome, Icilius! Welcome, friends! Icilius, I hoped to speak with you, to-day, of feasting And merriment, but war is now the word; One that unlovingly keeps time with mirth, Unless war's own—when the fierce fight is won, And, safe carousing, comrades drink to victory!

Icil. Virginus! have you changed your mind?

Virginus. My mind?

What mind? How now! Are you that boy, Icilius,

You set your heart so earnestly upon

A dish of poor confections, that to balk you

Makes you look blank! I did design to feast you

Together with your friends. The times are changed—

The march, the tent, the fight becomes us now!

Icil. Virginus!

Virginus. Well!

Icil. Virginus!

Virginus. How the boy

Reiterates my name!

Icil. There's not a hope

I have but is the client of Virginus!

Virginus. Well, well! I only meant to put it off!

We'll have the revel yet! the board shall smoke!

The cup shall sparkle, and the jest shall soar

And mock us from the roof! Will that content you?

Not till the war be done, though—Yet, ere then,

Some tongue, that now needs only wag to make

The table ring, may have a tale to tell

So petrifying, that it cannot utter it!

I'll make all sure, that you may be my guest

At any rate—although you should be forced

To play the host for me and feast yourself.

Look here, [*shows a parchment to ICILIUS*]

How think you?—Will it meet the charge?

Will it not do? We want a witness, though!

I'll bring one; of whom if you approve, I'll sign

The bond. I'll wait upon you instantly.

[*Goes out.*]

Luc. How feel you now, Icilius?

Icil. Like a man

Whom the next moment makes or quite unmakes.

With the intensity of exquisite

Suspense, my breathing thickens, and my heart

Beats heavily, and with remittent throb,

As like to lose its action—See! my hope

Is bless'd! I live! I live!

Enter VIRGINIUS, conducting VIRGINIA, with NUMITORIUS.

Virginus. You are my witnesses,

That this young creature I present to you,

I boast of, as my profitably cherish'd,
 And most deservedly belovéd child;
 My daughter truly filial—both in word
 And act—yet even more in act than word;
 And—for the man who hopes to win her hand—
 A virgin, from whose lips a soul as pure
 Exhales, as e'er responded to the blessing
 Breathed in a parent's kiss. [*Kissing her.*] Icilius!
 [*ICILIUS rushes towards VIRGINIUS, and kneels.*
 Since

You are upon your knee, young man, look up;
 And lift your hand to heaven—You will be all
 Her father has been—added unto all
 A lover would be!

Icil. All that man should be
 To woman, I will be to her!

Virginus. The oath
 Is register'd! Didst thou but know, young man,
 How fondly I have watch'd her, since the day
 Her mother died, and left me to a charge
 Of double duty bound—how she hath been
 My ponder'd thought by day, my dream by night,
 My prayer, my vow, my offering, my praise,
 My sweet companion, pupil, tutor, child!—
 Thou wouldst not wonder that my drowning eye,
 And choking utterance, upbraid my tongue
 That tells thee; she is thine!—*Icilius.*
 I now betroth her to thee! When the war
 Is done—you shall espouse her. Friends, a word!

[*VIRGINIUS and the rest retire.*

Icil. Virginia! my Virginia! I am all
 Dissolved—o'erpower'd with the munificence
 Of this auspicious hour—and thou, nor movest—
 Nor look'st—nor speak'st—to bless me with a sign
 Of sweet according joy!—I love thee, but
 To make thee happy! If to make thee so
 Be bliss denied to me—lo, I release
 The gifted hand—that I would faster hold,
 Than wretches, bound for death, would cling to life.
 If thou wouldst take it back—then take it back.

Virginia. I take it back—to give it thee again!

Icil. O help me to a word to speak my bliss,
 Or I am beggar'd—No! There's no such word!
 There cannot be; for never man had bliss
 Like mine to name!

Virginia. Thou dost but beggar me,
Icilius, when thou makest thyself a bankrupt;
 Placing a value on me far above
 My real little worth.—I'd help thee to
 A hundred words; each one of which would far
 O'er-rate thy gain, and yet no single one
 Rate over high!

Icil. Thou couldst not do it! No;
 Thou couldst not do it! Every term of worth
 Writ down and doubled, then the whole summ'd up,
 Would leave with thee a rich remainder still!—
 Pick from each rarer pattern of thy sex
 Her rarest charm, till thou hast every charm
 Of soul and body that can blend in woman,
 I would out-paragon the paragon
 With thee!

Virginia. And if thou wouldst, I'd find thee, for
 Thy paragon, a mate—if that can be
 A mate which beats the thing 'tis ta'en to match—
 One that would make thy paragon look poor—
 And I would call that so o'ermatching mate
 "Icilius."

Icil. No! I will not let thee win
 On such a theme as this!

Virginia. Nor will I drop
 The controversy, that the richer makes me
 The more I lose!

Icil. My sweet Virginia,
 We do but lose and lose, and win and win;
 Playing for nothing but to lose and win.
 Then let us drop the game—and thus I stop it. [Kisses her.]

Re-enter VIRGINIUS, and the others.

Virginius. Witness, my friends, that seal! Observe, it is
 A living one! It is Icilius' seal;
 And stamp'd upon as true and fair a bond—
 Though it receive the impress blushing—
 As ever signet kiss'd! Are all content?
 Speak else! She is thy free affianced wife,
 Thou art her free affianced husband! Come,
 We have o'erdrawn our time—Farewell, Virginia;
 Thy future husband for a time must be
 Bellona's. To thy tasks, again, my child;
 Be thou the bride of study for a time.
 Farewell!

Virginia. My father!

Virginius. May the gods protect thee!

Virginia. My father!

Virginius. Does the blood forsake thy cheek?
 Come to my arms once more! Remember, girl,
 The first and foremost debt a Roman owes
 Is to his country; and it must be paid,
 If need be, with his life.—Why, how you hold me!
 Icilius, take her from me! Servia!
 Come, boy.

Icil. Farewell, Virginia!

Virginius. [To SERVIA.] Take her in!

Virginia. The gods be with thee, my Icilius! Father,
 The gods be with thee—and Icilius.

Virginius. Come! I swear a battle might be fought and won
 In half the time! Now, once for all, farewell!
 Your sword and buckler, boy! The foe! the foe!
 Does he not tread on Roman ground! Come on!
 Come on!—Charge on him!—Drive him back, or die!
[They go out.]

SCENE III.—*Appius's House.**Enter* APPIUS.

It was a triumph, the achieving which
 O'erpaid the hazard that we ran—though great.
 They have made trial of their strength, and learn'd
 Its value from defeat. The senate knows
 Its masters now; and the decemvirate,
 To make its reign eternal, only needs
 Its own decree. Ere this the saucy foe
 Has met the chastisement he merited;
 Which turns his bold assault to shameful flight,
 Leaving us, henceforth, leisure to enjoy
 The boundless harvest of our glorious daring!
 Tyranny thrives in Rome! O Tyranny!
 How godlike is thy port! Thou givest and takest,
 And ask'st no other leave, than what thy own
 Imperial will accords. Jove does no more!
 Now, Claudius—

Enter CLAUDIUS.*Claud.* We have suffer'd a defeat!*App.* What! The decemvirs fly!

Claud. The soldiers fight
 With only half a heart. The other half
 Looks on, and cares not which side proves the winner

App. Then decimate them. Traitors! Recreants!

Why, we shall have them at our very doors!

Have we lost ground, my Claudius?

Claud. None, except
 What we've retraced in fame. We strove to teach
 The enemy their road lay backwards, but
 They would not turn their faces for us. Each
 Retains his former line.

Enter MARCUS.*App.* What news?*Mar.* The Æqui

Still press upon us. Rumours are afloat
 Of new disasters, which the common cry,
 Be sure, still multiplies and swells. Dentatus,
 That over-busy, crabbéd veteran,
 Walks up and down among the people, making
 Your plans his theme of laughter. Nought he stints,

That may reflect you in an odious light,
And lower the decemvirate.

App. A dungeon

Would do good service to him! Once within,
Strangling were easy! We must stop his mouth—
Unwholesome food—or liquor—Where was he
When last you heard him?

Marc. In the Forum.

App. So!

He is past service, is he not? Some way
To clear the city of him. Come, we'll hear him,
And answer him, and silence him! 'Tis well
The dog barks forth his spleen! It puts us on
Our guard against his bite. Come to the Forum!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE IV.—*The Forum.*

Enter DENTATUS, with TITUS, SERVIUS, and Citizens.

Tit. What's to be done?

Den. We'll be undone—that's to be done.

Ser. We'll do away with the decemvirate.

Den. You'll do away with the decemvirate?—The decemvirate will do away with you! You'll do away with yourselves! Do nothing!—The enemy will do away with both of you. In another month a Roman will be a stranger in Rome. A fine pass we are come to, masters!

Tit. But something must be done.

Den. Why, what would you have? You shout and clap your hands, as if it were a victory you heard of; and yet you cry—Something must be done! Truly, I know not what that something is, unless it be to make you General. How say you, masters?

Ser. We'd follow any man that knew how to lead us, and would rid us of our foes, and the decemvirate together.

Den. You made these decemvirs!—You are strangely discontented with your own work! And you are over-cunning workmen, too—You put your materials so firmly together, there's no such thing as taking them asunder! What you build, you build—except it be for your own good.—There you are bunglers at your craft. Ha! ha! ha! I cannot but laugh to think how you toiled, and strained, and sweated, to rear the stones of the building one above another, when I see the ugly faces you make at it!

Tit. But tell us the news again.

Den. Is it so good? Does it so please you? Then prick your ears again, and listen. We have been beaten again—beaten back on our own soil. Rome has seen its haughty masters fly before chastisement, like slaves—returning cries for blows—and all this of your decemvirs, gentlemen!

1st *Cit.* Huzza for it again!

[*The people shout.*]

2nd *Cit.* Hush! Appius comes.

Den. And do you care for that? You that were, just now, within a stride of taking him and his colleagues by the throat? You'll do away with the decemvirs, will you!—and let but one of them appear, you dare not for your life but keep your spleen within your teeth! Listen to me, now! I'll speak the more for Appius—[*Enter APPIUS, CLAUDIUS, and MARCUS, preceded by Lictors.*—]I say, to the eternal infamy of Rome, the foe has chased her sons, like hares, on their own soil, where they should prey like lions—and so they would, had they not keepers to tame them.

App. What's that you are saying to the people, Siccus Dentatus?

Den. I am regaling them with the news.

App. The news?

Den. Ay, the news—the newest that can be had; and the more novel because unlooked for. Who ever thought to see the eagle in the talons of the kite?

App. It is not well done in you, Dentatus, to chafe a sore. It makes it rankle. If your surgery has learned no better, it should keep its hands to itself! You have very little to do, to busy yourself after this fashion.

Den. I busy myself as I like, Appius Claudius.

App. I know you do, when you labour to spread disaffection among the people, and bring the decemvirs into contempt.

Den. The decemvirs bring themselves into contempt.

App. Ha! dare you say so?

Den. Dare! I have dared cry "Come on!" to a cohort of bearded warriors—Is it thy smooth face should appal me? Dare!—It never yet flurried me to use my arm—Shall I not, think you, be at my ease when I but wag my tongue? Dare; indeed!

App. Your grey hairs should keep company with honest speech!

Den. Shall I show you, Appius, the company they are wont to keep? Look here! and here [*uncovering his forehead and showing scars*]. These are the vouchers of honest deeds—Such is the speech with which my grey hairs keep company. I tell you, to your teeth, the decemvirs bring themselves into contempt.

App. What, are they not serving their country at the head of her armies?

Den. They'd serve her better in the body of her armies! I'd name for thee a hundred centurions would make better generals! A common soldier of a year's active service would take his measures better! Generals! Our generals were wont to teach us how to win battles.—Tactics are changed; your generals instruct us how to lose them.

App. Do you see my lictors?

Den. There are twelve of them.

App. What if I bid them seize thee?

Den. They'd blush to do it.

App. Why now, Dentatus, I begin to know you ;
I fancied you a man that loved to vent
His causeless anger in an under-breath,
And speak it in the ear—and only then
When there was safety ! Such a one, you'll own,
Is dangerous ; and to be trusted, as
A friend or foe, unworthy. But I see
You rail to faces ! Have you not so much
Respect for Appius as to take him by
The hand, when he confesses you have some
Pretence to quarrel with his colleagues' plans,
And find fault with himself ?—which yet, you'll own,
May quite as well be kindly done, Dentatus,
As harshly. Had you only to myself
Declared your discontents, the more you had rail'd,
The more I should have thank'd you.

Den. Had I thought—

App. And have you been campaigning, then, so long,
And prosperously—and mistrust you, Siccus,
That a young scarless soldier, like myself,
Would listen to your tutoring ? See, now,
How much you have mistaken me ! Dentatus,
In a word—Can you assist the generals,
And will you ?

Den. I have all the will—but as
For the ability—

App. Tut ! tut ! Dentatus,
You vex me now. This coyness sits not well on you !
You know as well as I, you have as much
Ability as will. I would not think you
A man that loved to find fault, but to find it !
Surely the evil you complain of, you
Would lend a hand to remedy ! See, now,
'Tis fairly put to you—what say you ?

Den. Appius,
You may use me as you please.

App. And that will be,
As you deserve. I'll send you, as my legate,
To the army. [*Shouts from the people.*] Do you hear your
friends, Dentatus ?

A lucky omen, that ! Away ! away !
Apprise your house—Prepare for setting out.
I'll hurry your credentials. Minutes now
Rate high as hours ! Assist my colleagues with
Your counsel ; if their plans displease you, why
Correct them—change them—utterly reject them.
And if you meet obstruction, notice me,
And I will push it by. There, now ! Your hand !
Again ! Away ! All the success attend you
That Appius wishes you !

Den. Success is from

The gods, whose hand soe'er it pleases them
To send it by: I know not what success
'Tis Appius' wish they send; but this I know
I am a soldier; and, as a soldier, I
Am bound to serve. All the success I ask,

Is that which benefits my country, Appius. [*DENTATUS goes out.*

App. You've served her over long! [*Aside.*] Now for our
causes. [*APPIUS ascends the tribunal.*

Claud. [*To MARCUS.*] Do you see the drift of this?

Marc. I cannot guess it.

Claud. Nor I.

App. [*To a Plebeian.*] Are you the suitor in this cause?
Speak!

Plebeian. Noble Appius, if there's law in Rome,
To right a man most injured, to that law
Against you proud patrician I appeal.

App. No more of that, I say! Because he's rich
And great, you call him proud! 'Tis not unlike
Because you're poor and mean, you call yourself
Injured. Relate your story; and, so please you,
Spare epithets.

Plebeian. Grant me a minute's pause,
And I'll begin.

[*VIRGINIA at this moment crosses the stage with her
Nurse, and is met by NUMITORIUS, who holds her in
conversation: APPIUS rivets his eyes upon her.*

Num. You have heard the news?

Virginia. What news, dear uncle?

Num. Step

Aside with me, I'll tell you.

[*Takes her a little farther from the tribunal.*

App. Can it be

A mortal that I look upon?

Virginia. They are safe!

I thank the gods!

App. Her eyes look up to heaven

Like something kindred to it—rather made
To send their glances down, and fill the earth
With worship and with gratulation. What
A thrill runs up and down my veins, and all
Throughout me!

Plebeian. Now, most noble Appius—

App. Stop!

Put off the cause; I cannot hear it, now.

Attend to-morrow. An oppressive closeness
Allows me not to breathe. Lictors! make clear
The ground about the rostrum!

[*Descends, and approaches CLAUDIUS with precipitation.*

Claudius! Claudius!—

Marcus, go you and summon my physician

To be at home before me.

[*MARCUS goes out.*

Claudius, look!

Virginia. You send a messenger to-night?

Num. I do.

App. Paint me that smile! I never saw a smile
Till now. My Claudius, is she not a wonder?
I know not whether in the state of girlhood
Or womanhood to call her. 'Twixt the two
She stands, as that were loath to lose her, this
To win her most impatient. The young year
Trembling and blushing 'twixt the striving kisses
Of parting spring and meeting summer, seems
Her only parallel!

Num. 'Tis well! I'll send
Your father word of this. But have you not
A message to Icilius?

App. Mark you, Claudius?

There is a blush! I must possess her.

Virginia. Tell him,
I think upon him. Farewell, Numitorius!

[*Goes out with SERVIA.*]

Num. Farewell, Virginia.

Claud. Master, will you tell me
The name of that young maiden?

Num. She is call'd
Virginia, daughter of Virginius;
A Roman citizen, and a centurion
Now with the army.

Claud. She is very like
The daughter of a friend of mine. Farewell.

[*NUMITORIUS goes out.*]

App. I burn, my Claudius! brain and heart—there's not
A fibre in my body but's on fire!

With what a gait she moves! Such was not Hebe,
Or Jupiter had sooner lost his heaven,
Than changed his cupbearer! A step like that
The rapture-glowing clouds might well bear up,
And never take for human! Find me, Claudius,
Some way to compass the possession of her!

Claud. 'Tis difficult—her father's of repute;
The highest of his class.

App. I guess'd it! Friends
Are ever friends, except when they are needed.

Claud. Nay, Appius!

App. If thou canst not give me hope,
Be dumb!

Claud. A female agent may be used
With some success.

App. How? How?

Claud. To tamper with
That woman who attends her.

App. Set about it.

Claud. Could she but be induced to help you to
A single meeting with her—

App. Claudius! Claudius!

Effect but that!

Claud. I'll instantly about it.

App. Spare not my gold—nor stop at promises.

I will fulfil them fast as thou canst make them.

To purchase such a draught of ecstasy

I'd drain a kingdom—Set about it, Claudius!

Away! I will not eat, nor drink, nor sleep,

Until I hear from thee!

Claud. Depend upon me!

App. I do, my Claudius, for my life—my life!

[*They go out severally.*]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Appius's House.*

APPIUS [*entering*].

It is not love, if what I've felt before

And call'd by such a name be love—a thing

That took its turn—that I could entertain,

Put off, or humour. 'Tis some other thing;

Or if the same, why in some other state—

Or I am not the same—or it hath found

Some other part of sensibility

More quick, whereon to try its power, and there

Expend it all! Now, Claudius, your success?

Enter CLAUDIUS.

Claud. Nothing would do, yet nothing left undone!

She was not to be purchased.

App. Did she guess—

Claud. She could not.

So guarded was my agent; who described you

A man of power, of noble family,

And regal fortune—one that ask'd not what

His pleasures cost—no further made disclosure.

App. And did it nothing move her, Claudius?

Claud. Nothing.

The more my agent urged, the more she shrunk

And wither'd hag grew callous. Further press'd

And with more urgent importuning; ire

And scorn, in imprecations and invectives,

Vented upon the monster—as she call'd him—

That would pollute her child, compell'd my advocate
To drop the suit she saw was hopeless.

App. Now

Had I a friend indeed!

Claud. Has Appius need

To search for such a friend, and Claudius by him?

App. Friends ever are provisionally friends—

Friends for so far—friends just to such a point,
And then “farewell!”—friends with an understanding—

As “should the road be pretty safe”—“the sea

Not over-rough,” and so on—friends of *ifs*

And *buts*—no friends! O could I find the man

Would be a simple thorough-going friend!

Claud. I thought you had one, Appius.

App. So thought Appius,

Till Appius thought upon a test of friendship,

He fears he would not render to himself,

Could he be Appius' friend.

Claud. Then Appius has

A truer friend than Appius is to Appius.

I'll give that test!

App. What! you'd remove her father

And that Icilius whom you told me of?

Claud. Count it a thing already done.

App. My Claudius!

Can I believe it? Art thou such a friend,

That, when I look'd for thee to stop and leave me,

I find thee, keeping with me, step by step;

And even in thy loving eagerness

Outstriding me?—I do not want thee, Claudius,

To soil thy hand with their plebeian blood.

Claud. What wouldst thou, then?

App. I was left guardian to thee—

Claud. Thou wast.

App. Among the various property

Thy father left were many female slaves.

Claud. Well?

App. It were easy for thee, were it not,

To invent a tale that one of them confess'd

She had sold a female infant (and, of course,

Thy slave) unto Virginus' wife, who pass'd it

Upon Virginus as his daughter, which

Supposititious offspring is this same

Virginia.

Claud. I conceive you.

App. To induce

Your agent to confirm your tale would cost

But small persuasion. Is it done?

Claud. This hour!

I'll find the school, my Appius, where Virginia

Pursues her studies. Thither I'll repair,

And seize her as my slave, at once. Do thou

Repair to thy tribunal, whither, should
Her friends molest me in the attempt, I'll bring her,
And plead my cause before thee.

App. Claudius! Claudius!

How shall I pay thee? O, thou noble friend!
Power, fortune, life, whate'er belongs to Appius,
Reckon as thine! Away, away, my Claudius!

[They go out severally.]

SCENE II.—*A Street in Rome.*

Enter LUCIUS, *meeting* TITUS, SERVIUS, *and* CNEIUS.

Luc. Well, masters, any news of Siccus Dentatus from the camp, how he was received by the decemvirs?

Tit. He was received well by the decemvirs.

Cne. It wasn't then for the love they bear him.

Tit. But they expect he'll help them to return the cuffs they have gotten from the enemy.

Ser. Do you wish for a victory?

Luc. Yes, if Dentatus wins it. 'Tis to our credit, masters—He's one of us.

Ser. And is not Spurius Oppius one of us?

Luc. He is; but he's in league with the patricians—that is, the patrician decemvirs. He is but half a plebeian, and that is the worst half. The better half he threw away when he became half a patrician. I never liked your half-and-half gentry; they generally combine the bad of both kinds, without the good of either.

Ser. Well, we shall have news presently. Your brother, Icilius, has just arrived with despatches from the camp. I met him passing through the Forum, and asked him what news he brought. He answered, none; but added, we might look for news of another kind than what we had been lately accustomed to hear.

[A shriek without.]

Cne. What's that!

Tit. Look yonder, masters! See!

Ser. 'Tis Appius's client dragging a young woman along with him.

Tit. Let us stand by each other, masters, and prevent him

Enter CLAUDIUS, *dragging along* VIRGINIA, *followed by* SERVIA *and others.*

Servia. Help! help! help!

Luc. Let go your hold!

Claud. Stand by!

She is my slave!

Servia. His slave? Help! help! His slave?—

He looks more like a slave than she! Good masters
Protect the daughter of Virginius!

Luc. Release the maid.

Tit. Forbear this violence.

Claud. I call for the assistance of the laws;
She is my slave.

Servia. She is my daughter, masters,
My foster-daughter; and her mother was
A free-born woman—and her father is
A citizen!—a Roman!—good Virginius,
As I said before—Virginius, the centurion,
Whom all of you must know.—Help! help! I say.
You see she cannot speak to help herself;
Speak for her, masters—help her, if you're men!

Tit. Let go your hold!

Claud. Obstruct me at your peril!

Luc. We'll make you, if you will not!

Claud. Let me pass!

Ser. Let go your hold, once more!

Claud. Good masters! patience—
Hear me, I say—She is my slave—I wish not
To use this violence, my friends; but may not
A master seize upon his slave?—Make way,
Or such of you as are dissatisfied,
Repair with me to the decemvir.—Come,
I only want my right!

Tit. Come on, then!

Ser. Ay,
To the decemvir!

Servia. Run, run for Numitorius!—Alarm our neighbours!
—Call out Icilius' friends!—I shall go mad! Help! help!
[*They go out.*]

SCENE III.—*The Forum.*

Enter APPIUS, preceded by Lictors.

App. Will he succeed?—Will he attempt it?—Will he
Go through with it?—[*Looking out*].—No sign—I almost wish
He had not undertaken it; yet wish,
More than I wish for life, he may accomplish
What he has undertaken. O! the pause
That precedes action! It is vacancy
That o'erweighs action's substance. What I fear
Most is the hour. My blind impatience saw not
'Twas day! Her all-persuasive charms, alone
Will gather round her, from the passers-by
Troops to her succour!—What, then, with the aid
Of cries and tears, enforcing their appeal? [*Listens.*]
That sound brings feet in haste!—He brings her, but
Behemm'd with friends!—Now, play for love,
As boldly as for power! I must prepare
For his reception.

[*APPIUS ascends the tribunal—CLAUDIUS enters, still
holding VIRGINIA, followed by SERVIA, Women,
and Citizens.*]

Claud. Do not press upon me ;
Here's the decemvir—he will satisfy you,
Whether a master has a right, or not,
To seize his slave whene'er he finds her.

Servia. Slave!

She is no slave. Thou liest to call her so!
She never was a slave! Thou worse than slave!
To give her such a name—Ay! threaten me!
She is a free-born maid, and not a slave,
Or never was a free-born maid in Rome!
O! you shall dearly answer for it!

App. Peace!

What quarrel's this? Speak, those who are aggrieved.

Enter NUMITORIUS.

Num. Where is Virginia—Wherefore do you hold
That maiden's hand?

Claud. Who asks the question?

Num. I!

Her uncle Numitorius!

Claud. Numitorius,

You think yourself her uncle—Numitorius,
No blood of yours flows in her veins, to give you
The title that you claim. Most noble Appius!
If you sit here for justice, as I hope
You do, attend not to the clamour of
This man, who calls himself this damsel's *uncle*.
She is my property—was born beneath
My father's roof, whose slave her mother was,
Who—as I can establish past dispute—
Sold her, an infant, to Virginius' wife,
Who never had a child, and heavily
Revolved her barrenness. My slave I have found
And seized—as who that finds his own (no matter
How long so ever miss'd) should fear to take it?
If they oppose my claim, let them produce
Their counter-proofs, and bring the cause to trial!
But till they prove I know not what's mine own—
An undertaking somewhat perilous—
Mine own I shall retain—yet giving them,
Should they demand it, what security
They please for re-producing her.

App. Why that

Would seem but reasonable.

Num. Reasonable!

Claudius! [*With much vehemence—recollects himself.*]

He's but a mask upon the face

Of some more powerful contriver. [*Aside.*] Appius,
My niece's father is from Rome, thou know'st,
Serving his country. Is it not unjust,
In the absence of a citizen, to suffer

His right to his own child to be disputed?
 Grant us a day to fetch Virginus,
 That he himself may answer this most foul
 And novel suit—Meanwhile, to me belongs
 The custody of the maid. Her uncle's house
 Can better answer for her honour than
 The house of Claudius. 'Tis the law of Rome,
 Before a final sentence, the defendant
 May not sustain in what he still possesses
 Disturbance from the plaintiff.

Tit. A just law.

Ser. And a most reasonable demand.

All the Citizens. Ay! Ay! Ay!

App. Silence, you citizens! Will you restrain
 Your tongues, and give your magistrate permission
 To speak? The law is just—most reasonable—
 I framed that law myself—I will maintain
 That law!

Tit. Most noble Appius!

Ser. A most just decree!

All the Citizens. Ay! Ay!

App. Will you be silent? Will you please to wait
 For my decree, you most untractable
 And boisterous citizens! Yes; I repeat,
 I framed that law myself, and will maintain it.
 But are you, Numitorius, here defendant?
 That title none but the reputed father
 Of the young woman has a right to—How
 Can I commit to thee what may appear
 The plaintiff's property; and, if not his,
 Still, is not thine? I'll give thee till to-morrow
 Ere I pass a final judgment—But the girl
 Remains with Claudius, who shall bind himself
 In such security as you require,
 To re-produce her at the claim of him
 Who calls her daughter—This is my decree.

Num. A foul decree.—Shame! Shame!

Ser. Ay, a most foul decree.

Cne. A villanous decree.

Ser. Most villanous.

Servia. Good citizens, what do you with our weapons,
 When you should use your own? Your hands!—your hands!
 He shall not take her from us!

Gather round her,

And if he touch her, be it to his cost!

And if ye see him touch her, never more

Expect from us your titles—never more

Be husbands, brothers, lovers, at our mouths,

Or anything that doth imply the name

Of men—except such men as *men* should blush for.

App. Command your wives and daughters, citizens,
 They quit the Forum!

Servia. They shall not command us,
That care not to protect us!

App. Take the girl,
If she is yours.

Claud. Stand by!

Virginia. O save me! save me!

ICIL. [entering]. Virginia's voice!—Virginia! [*Rushes to her.*

Virginia. O, Icilius! [*Falls fainting in his arms.*

ICIL. Take her, good Numitorius.

App. You had better

Withdraw, Icilius; the affair is judged.

Claud. I claim my slave.

ICIL. Stand back, thou double slave!

Touch her, and I will tear thee limb from limb,
Before thy master's face.—She is my wife,
My life, my heart, my heart's blood.—Touch her
With but a look——

App. My lictors, there, advance!

See that Icilius quits the Forum.—Claudius,
Secure your slave.

ICIL. Lictors, a moment pause

For your own sakes! Do not mistake these arms!

Think not the strength of any common man

Is that they feel! They serve a charmed frame,

The which a power pervades, that ten times trebles

The natural energy of each single nerve

To sweep you down as reeds.

App. Obey my orders!

ICIL. Appius! before I quit the Forum, let me
Address a word to you.

App. Be brief, then!

ICIL. Brief!

Is't not enough you have deprived us, Appius,

Of the two strongest bulwarks to our liberties,

Our tribunes and our privilege of appeal

To the assembly of the people? Cannot

The honour of the Roman maids be safe?

Know, then, this virgin is betroth'd to me,

Wife of my hope—Thou shalt not cross my hope

And I retain my life—Attempt it not!

I stand among my fellow-citizens—

His fellow-soldiers hem Virginius round,

Both men and gods are on our side! But grant

I stood alone, with nought but virtuous love

To hearten me—alone would I defeat

The execution of thy infamous

Decree! I'll quit the Forum now, but not

Alone!—My love! my wife! my free-born maid—

The virgin standard of my pride and manhood,

Of peerless motto! rich, and fresh, and shining,

And of device most rare and glorious!

I'll bear off safe with me—unstain'd—untouch'd!

App. Your duty, lictors—Claudius, look to your right!

Icil. True citizens!

Tit. Down with the traitor!

Ser. Down with him—Slay him!

[*The Lictors and CLAUDIUS are driven back; CLAUDIUS takes refuge at APPIUS's feet, who has descended, and throws up his arms as a signal to both parties to desist—whereupon the people retire a little.*

App. So, friends! we thank you that you don't deprive us Of everything; but leave your magistrates At least their persons sacred—Their decrees, It seems, you value as you value straws, And in like manner break them. Wherefore stop When you have gone so far? You might, methinks, As well have kill'd my client, at my feet; As threaten'd him with death before my face! Rise, Claudius! I perceive Icilius' aim:— He labours to restore the tribuneship By means of a sedition! We'll not give him The least pretence of quarrel. We shall wait Virginius's arrival till to-morrow. His friends take care to notice him—The camp's But four hours' journey from the city. Till To-morrow, then, let me prevail with you To yield up something of your right, and let The girl remain at liberty.

Claud. If they

Produce security for her appearance,
I am content.

Tit. I'll be your security.

Ser. And I.

Cit. We'll all be your security. [*They hold up their hands.*

Icil. My friends,

And fellow-citizens, I thank you; but Reserve your kindness for to-morrow, friends, If Claudius still persist—To-day I hope He will remain content with my security, And that of Numitorius, for the maid's Appearance.

App. See she do appear!—and come Prepared to pay the laws more reverence, As I shall surely see that they receive it.

[*APPIUS, CLAUDIUS, and Lictors go out.*

Icil. Look up! look up! my sweet Virginia, Look up! look up! You will see none but friends. O that such eyes should e'er meet other object!

Virginia. Icilius! Uncle! lead me home! Icilius, You did not think to take a slave to wife?

Icil. I thought, and think to wed a free-born maid; And thou, and thou alone, art she, Virginia!

Virginia. I feel as I were so—I do not think I am his slave! Virginius not my father!

Virginius, my dear father, not my father!
It cannot be; my life must come from him;
For, make him not my father, it will go
From me.—I could not live an he were not
My father.

Icil. Dear Virginia, calm thy thoughts—
But who shall warn Virginius?

Num. I've ta'en care
Of that; no sooner heard I of this claim,
Than I despatch'd thy brother Lucius,
Together with my son, to bring Virginius,
With all the speed they could; and caution'd them—
As he is something over-quick of temper,
And might snatch justice, rather than sue for it—
To evade communication of the cause,
And merely say his presence was required,
Till we should have him with us. Come, Virginia;
Thy uncle's house shall guard thee, till thou find'st
Within thy father's arms a citadel,
Whence Claudius cannot take thee!

Icil. He shall take
A thousand lives first.

Tit. Ay, ten thousand lives.

Icil. Hear you, Virginia! Do you hear your friends?

Virginia. Let him take *my* life first! I am content
To be his slave then—if I am his slave!

Icil. Thou art a free-born Roman maid, Virginia;
All Rome doth know thee so, Virginia—
All Rome will see thee so.

Cit. We will! We will!

Icil. You'll meet us here to-morrow?

Cit. Every man!

Icil. Cease not to clamour 'gainst this outrage. Tell it
In every corner of the city; and
Let no man call himself a son of Rome
Who stands aloof, when tyranny assails
Her fairest daughter. Come, Virginia,
'Tis not a private, but a common wrong;
'Tis every father's, lover's, freeman's cause;
To-morrow, fellow-citizens! to-morrow!

Cit. To-morrow!

[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE IV.—*The Camp.*

Enter S. OPPIUS and Q. F. VIBULANUS.

Opp. Has he set out?

Vibul. He has, my Oppius,
And never to return; his guard, instructed
To take good care of him. There's not a man
But's ten times sold to us, and of our wishes
Fully possess'd. Dentatus will no more

Obstruct us in our plans. He did not like
The site of our encampment. He will find
At least the air of it was wholesome.

Opp. What

Report are they instructed to bring back?

Vibul. They fell into an ambush—He was slain.

Opp. But should the truth by any means ooze out?

Vibul. Imprison them, and secretly despatch them,
Or ope the dungeon-doors, and let them 'scape.

Opp. I should prefer the latter method.

Vibul. Well,

That be our choice. But when it is determined

To spill blood otherwise than as it may

Be spill'd, to hesitate about some drops

Is weakness, may be fatal.—Come, my friend,

Let us be seen about the camp, and ready,

With most admiring ear, to catch the tidings,

Which all ears, save our own, will wonder at.

Here's one that went with him!

Enter MARCUS.

Well, friend, your news?

Marc. Dentatus is no more; but he has dearly sold his life.
The matter has been reported as you directed. By few it is
received with credence—by many with doubt; while some
bold spirits stop not at muttering, but loudly speak suspicion
of foul play. A party that we met, a mile beyond the lines,
no sooner heard our story, than they set off to bring the body
to the camp. Others have followed them. Fabius, we have
your gage for safety.

Vibul. You have.—Come, let us show ourselves.—Guilt
hides,

And we must wear the port of innocence,

That walks abroad and looks its foes in the face. [*They go out.*]

SCENE V.—*A Mountainous Pass.*

The body of DENTATUS *discovered on a bier—Soldiers mourning over it.*

Trumpets—Enter VIRGINIUS *and Soldiers.*

Virginus. Where is Dentatus? Where is the gallant soldier?

Ah, comrade! comrade! warm! yet warm! So lately

Gone, when I would have given the world, only

To say farewell to thee, or even get

A parting look! O gallant, gallant soldier,

The god of war might sure have spared a head

Grown grey in serving him! My brave old comrade!

The father of the field! Thy silver locks

Other anointing should receive, than what

Their master's blood could furnish!

1st Soldier. There has been treachery here!

Virginus. What!

1st Soldier. The slain are all our own. None of the bodies are stripp'd—These are all Romans. There is not the slightest trace of an enemy's retreat—And, now, that I remember, they made a sudden halt, when we came in sight of them at the foot of the mountain—Mark'd you not, too, with what confused haste they told their story, directed us, and hurried on to the camp?

Virginus. Revenge! The decemvirs! Ay, the decemvirs! For every drop of blood thou shalt have ten,
Dentatus!

Luc. [without]. Ho! Virginus!

Virginus. Here! Who calls?

Luc. [entering]. 'Tis well you're found, Virginus!

Virginus. Is it you?

What makes you from the city? Look, my Lucius!—

See what a sight you've come to witness!—Look!

My brave old comrade! Honest Siccus!

Siccus Dentatus, that true son of Rome,

On whose white locks the mother look'd more proudly

Than on the raven ones of her youngest and

Most hopeful sons, is nothing now but this,

The sign and token of himself! Look, comrades,

Here are the foes that slew him! Not a trace

Of any other—not a body stripp'd—

Our father has been murder'd—We'll revenge him

Like sons! Take up the body! Bear it to

The camp; and as you move your solemn march,

Be dumb—or, if you speak, be it but a word,

And be that word—Revenge!

*[The Soldiers bear off the body—VIRGINIUS following,
is stopped by LUCIUS.]*

Luc. Virginus!

Virginus. I did not mind thee, Lucius!

Uncommon things make common things forgot.

Hast thou a message for me, Lucius? Well,

I'll stay and hear it—but be brief; my heart

Follows my poor Dentatus!

Luc. You are wanted

In Rome.

Virginus. On what account?

Luc. On your arrival

You'll learn.

Virginus. How! is it something can't be told

At once? Speak out, boy! Ha! your looks are loaded

With matter—Is't so heavy that your tongue

Cannot unburthen them? Your brother left

The camp on duty yesterday—Hath aught

Happen'd to him? Did he arrive in safety?

Is he safe? Is he well?

Luc. He is both safe and well.

Virgilius. What then? What then? Tell me the matter,

Lucius.

Luc. I have said
It shall be told you.

Virgilius. Shall! I stay not for
That "shall," unless it be so close at hand
It stop me not a moment.—'Tis too long
A coming! Fare you well, my *Lucius*.

Luc. Stay,
Virgilius; hear me then with patience.

Virgilius. Well,
I am patient.

Luc. Your *Virginia*—

Virgilius. Stop, my *Lucius*!
I'm cold in every member of my frame!
If 'tis prophetic, *Lucius*, of thy news,
Give me such token as her tomb would, *Lucius*—
I'll bear it better—Silence.

Luc. You are still—

Virgilius. I thank thee, *Jupiter*! I am still a father!

Luc. You are, *Virgilius*; yet—

Virgilius. What, is she sick?

Luc. No.

Virgilius. Neither dead nor sick! All well! No harm!
Nothing amiss! Each guarded quarter safe,
That Fear may lay him down and sleep, and yet
Still sounding the alarm! I swear thou tell'st
A story strangely. Out with't! I have patience
For anything, since my *Virginia* lives,
And lives in health!

Luc. You are required in Rome,
To answer a most novel suit.

Virgilius. Whose suit?

Luc. The suit of *Claudius*.

Virgilius. *Claudius*!

Luc. Him that's client

To *Appius Claudius*, the decemvir.

Virgilius. What!

That pander!—Ha!—*Virginia*!—You appear
To couple them! What makes my fair *Virginia*
In company with *Claudius*? Innocence
Beside lasciviousness! His suit! What suit?—
Answer me quickly!—Quickly! lest suspense,
Beyond what patience can endure, coercing,
Drive reason from her seat!

Luc. He has claim'd *Virginia*.

Virgilius. Claim'd her!—Claim'd her!—
On what pretence?

Luc. He says she is the child
Of a slave of his, who sold her to thy wife.

Virgilius. Go on, you see I'm calm.

Luc. He seized her in

The school, and dragg'd her to the Forum, where Appius was giving judgment.

Virginus. Dragg'd her to the Forum! Well! I told you, Lucius, I would be patient.

Luc. Numitorius there confronted him.

Virginus. Did he not strike him dead?—

True, true, I know it was in presence of

The decemvir.—O! had I confronted him!—

Well? well? The issue?—Well?—O'erleap all else,

And light upon the issue! Where is she?

Luc. I was despatch'd to fetch thee, ere I could learn.

Virginus. The claim of Claudius, Appius' client—Ha!

I see the master cloud!—This ragged one,

That lowers before, moves only in subservience

To the ascendant of the other—Jove,

With its own mischief break it and disperse it,

And that be all the ruin! Patience! Prudence!

Nay, prudence, but no patience. Come!—A slave—

Dragg'd through the streets in open day! My child!

My daughter! my fair daughter, in the eyes

Of Rome! O, I'll be patient!—Come!—The essence

Of my best blood in the free common ear

Condemn'd as vile!—O, I'll be patient!—Come!

O, they shall wonder—I will be so patient!

[*VIRGINIUS rushes out, followed by LUCIUS.*]

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Numitorius's House.*

VIRGINIA discovered, supported by SERVIA.

Virginia. Is he not yet arrived? Will he not come?

Servia. He surely will.

Virginia. He surely will! More surely

He had arrived already, had he known

How he is wanted—They have miss'd him, Servia!

Don't tell me, but I know they have, or surely

We had not now been looking for him. Where's

My uncle?

Servia. Finding you had fallen asleep

After such watching, he went forth to hear

If there were any tidings of Virginus.

He's here.

Enter NUMITORIUS; VIRGINIA looks at him inquisitively for some time.

Virginia. Not come! not come! I am sure of it!
He will not come! Do you not think he'll come?
Will not my father come? What think you, uncle?
Speak to me, speak—O give me any words,
Rather than what looks utter!

Num. Be composed!
I hope he'll come!

Virginia. A little while ago
You were sure of it—from certainty to hope
Is a poor step. You hope he'll come—One hope,
One little hope to face a thousand fears!
Do you not know he'll come? O uncle, wherefore
Do you not know he'll come? Had I been you,
I had made sure of it!

Num. All has been done
That could be done.

Virginia. Poor all, that does so little!
One would imagine little needs be done
To bring a father to the succour of
His child! 'Tis near the time!

Num. It is indeed!

Virginia. Must I go forth with you? Must I again
Be dragg'd along by Claudius, as his slave,
And none again to succour me? Icilius!
Icilius! Does your new betrothéd wife
Call on you, and you hear not? My Icilius!
Am I to be your wife, or Claudius' slave?
Where—where are you, Icilius!

ICILIUS [*entering*].

My Virginia!

What's to be done, my friend? 'tis almost time.

[*To NUMITORIUS.*]

Virginia. I hear what you are saying—it is time—
O, who could have believed it, that Icilius
Should ever say 'twas time to yield me to
Another's claim—And will you give me up?
Can you devise no means to keep me from him?
Could we not fly?

[*ICILIUS looks earnestly at NUMITORIUS, who fixes his eyes steadfastly on the ground: ICILIUS droops his head.*]

I see!—your pledge

Must be redeem'd, although it cost you your

Virginia!

Virginius [*without*]. Is she here?

Virginia. Ah!

[*Shrieks and rushes into her father's arms, who enters at the moment.*]

Virginius. My child! My child!

Virginia. I am! I feel I am! I know I am!
 My father! my dear father. I despair'd
 Of seeing you! You're come! and come in time.
 And, O! how much the more in time, when hope
 Had given you up. O! welcome, welcome foot,
 Whose wish'd step is heard when least expected!

Virinius. Brother! Icilius! thank you! thank you—All
 Has been communicated to me. Ay!
 And would they take thee from me? Let them try it!
 You've ta'en your measures well—I scarce could pass
 Along, so was I check'd by loving hands
 Ready to serve me—Hands with hearts in them!
 So thou art Claudius' slave? And if thou art,
 I'm surely not thy father! Blister'd villain!
 You have warn'd our neighbours, have you not, to attend
 As witnesses? To be sure you have! A fool
 To ask the question. Dragg'd along the streets too!
 'Twas very kind in him to go himself
 And fetch thee—such an honour should not pass
 Without acknowledgment. I shall return it
 In full! In full!

Num. Pray you be prudent, brother.

Virginia. Dear father, be advised—Will you not, father?

Virinius. I never saw you look so like your mother
 In all my life!

Virginia. You'll be advised, dear father?

Virinius. It was her soul—her soul, that play'd just then
 About the features of her child, and lit them
 Into the likeness of her own. When first
 She placed thee in my arms—I recollect it
 As a thing of yesterday!—she wish'd, she said,
 That it had been a man. I answer'd her,
 It was the mother of a race of men,
 And paid her for thee with a kiss. Her lips
 Are cold now—could they be but warm'd again,
 How they would clamour for thee!

Virginia. My dear father!

You do not answer me! Will you not be advised?

Virinius. I will not take him by the throat and strangle him!
 But I could do it! I could do it! Fear not:
 I will not strike while any head I love
 Is in the way. It is not now a time
 To tell thee—but, wouldst thou believe it!—Honest
 Siccus Dentatus has been murder'd by them!

Icil. Murder'd!

Num. Dentatus murder'd!

Virginia. O! how much
 Have we to fear!

Virinius. We have the less to fear!
 I spread the news at every step—A fire
 Is kindled, that will blaze at but a breath
 Into the fiercest flame!

Num. 'Tis time. Let's haste
To the Forum.

Virginus. Let the Forum wait for us !
Put on no show of fear, when villany
Would wrestle with you ! It can keep its feet
Only with cowards ! I shall walk along
Slowly and calmly, with my daughter thus
In my hand—though with another kind of gripe
Than that which Claudius gave her—Well, I say,
I'll walk along thus, in the eyes of Rome.
Go you before, and what appeal soe'er
You please, make you to rouse up friends. For me,
I shall be mute—my eloquence is here—
Her tears—her youth—her innocence—her beauty !
If orators like these can't move the heart,
Tongues surely may be dumb.

Icilius. A thousand hearts
Have spoke already in her cause !

Virginus. Come on !
Fear not ! it is your father's grasp you feel.
O he'll be strong as never man was yet,
That takes thee from it. Come, Virginia;
We trust our cause to Rome and to the gods ! [*They go out.*

SCENE II.—*The Forum.*

Enter APPIUS and Lictors.

App. See you keep back the people ! Use your fasces
With firmer hands, or hearts. Your hands are firm
Enough, would but your hearts perform their office,
And leave your hands at liberty ; not hang
Upon them with unseemly fears and clamours !
Look to it ! Time ! hadst thou the theme that I have
For speed, thou wouldst not move this cripple's gait :
But there's no urging thee, and thou wast ever
Dull fellow-traveller to young Impatience,
Dragging him back upon the road he pants
To end, but cannot run without thee.

Enter MARCUS.

Well ?

Marc. News has arrived, that speaks as if Dentatus
Was murder'd by the order of your colleagues !
There's not a face I meet but lowers with it :
The streets are fill'd with thronging groups, that, as
I pass'd, grew silent, and look'd sullen round,
Then fell again to converse.

App. 'Tis ill-timed.

Marc. What say you, Appius ?

App. Murder's ill-timed, I say,

Happen when 'twill: but now is most ill timed,
 When Rome is in a ferment, on account
 Of Claudius, and this girl, he calls his slave;
 For come when evil will, or how it will,
 All's laid to our account! Look out and see
 If Claudius be approaching yet. [MARCUS goes out.

My wish,
 Like an officious friend, comes out of time
 To tell me of success. I had rather far
 The plot had fail'd. The waves run high enough;
 There needed not this squall on squall to raise them
 Above the present swell:
 But such a haven,
 If won, can never be too dearly won!

Marc. [entering]. Claudius is here!

Enter CLAUDIUS.

App. Well, Claudius, are the forces
 At hand?

Claud. They are, and timely too! The people
 Are in unwonted ferment.

App. Marcus says
 That news has come of old Dentatus' death;
 Which, as I hear, and wonder not to hear it,
 The mutinous citizens lay to our account!

Claud. That's bad enough; yet—

App. Ha! what's worse?

Claud. 'Tis best

At once to speak what you must learn at last,
 Yet last of all would learn.

App. Virinius!

Claud. Yes!

He has arrived in Rome.

Marc. They are coming, Appius!

Claud. Fly, Marcus, hurry down the forces! [MARCUS goes
 out.] Appius,
 Be not o'erwhelm'd!

App. There's something awes me at
 The thought of looking on her father!

Claud. Look

Upon her, my Appius! Fix your gaze upon
 The treasures of her beauty, nor avert it
 Till they are thine. Haste! Your tribunal!—Haste!

[APPIUS ascends his tribunal.

Enter NUMITORIUS, ICILIUS, LUCIUS, Citizens, VIRINIUS
 leading his Daughter, SERVIA, and Citizens.—A dead silence
 prevails.

Virinius. Does no one speak? I am defendant here.
 Is silence my opponent? Fit opponent
 To plead a cause too foul for speech! What brow,
 In blank defiance both of gods and men,

Is bold enough to back the knave, whose tongue
Advanced the forgéd claim that stirs this suit
To compass the dishonour of my child—
For that's the game!—and now the trial's come,
Through shame or fear, has lost the power to wage
And ope the villain pleadings!

App. You had better,
Virginus, wear another kind of carriage:
This is not of the fashion that will serve you.

Virginus. The fashion, Appius! Appius Claudius, tell me
The fashion it becomes a man to speak in,
Whose property in his own child—the offspring
Of his own body, near to him as is
His hand, his arm—yea, nearer—closer far,
Knit to his heart—I say, who has his property
In such a thing, the very self of himself,
Disputed—and I'll speak so, Appius Claudius;
I'll speak so.—Pray you, tutor me!

App. Stand forth,
Claudius! If you lay claim to any interest
In the question now before us, speak; if not
Bring on some other cause.

Claud. Most noble Appius—

Virginus. And are you the man
That claims my daughter for his slave?—Look at me,
And I will give her to thee.

Claud. She is mine, then:
Do I not look at you?

Virginus. Your eye does, truly,
But not your soul.—I see it through your eye
Shifting and shrinking—turning every way
To shun me. You surprise me, that your eye,
So long the bully of its master, knows not
To put a proper face upon a lie,
But gives the port of impudence to falsehood,
When it would pass it off for truth. Your soul
Dares as soon show its face to me.—Go on,
I had forgot; the fashion of my speech
May not please Appius Claudius.

Claud. I demand
Protection of the decemvir!

App. You shall have it.

Virginus. Doubtless!

App. Keep back the people, lictors! What's
your plea? You say the girl's your slave—Produce
Your proofs.

Claud. My proof is here, which, if they can,
Let them confront. The mother of the girl—

[VIRGINIUS, stepping forward to speak, is withheld by
NUMITORIUS.]

Num. Hold, brother! Hear them out, or suffer me
To speak.

Virginius. Man, I must speak, or else go mad!
 And if I do go mad, what then will hold me
 From speaking? Wer't not better, brother, think you,
 To speak and not go mad, than to go mad
 And then to speak? She was thy sister, too!
 Well, well, speak thou. I'll try, and, if I can,
 Be silent.

[Retires.]

Num. Will she swear she is her child?

Virginius [starting forward]. To be sure she will—a most
 wise question that!

Is she not his slave! Will his tongue lie for him—
 Or his hand steal—or the finger of his hand
 Beckon, or point, or shut, or open for him?
 To ask him if she'll swear—Will she walk or run,
 Sing, dance, or wag her head; do anything
 That is most easy done? She'll as soon swear!
 What mockery it is to have one's life
 In jeopardy by such a barefaced trick!
 Is it to be endured? I do protest
 Against her oath!

App. No law in Rome, Virginius,
 Seconds you. If she swear the girl's her child,
 The evidence is good, unless confronted
 By better evidence. Look you to that,
 Virginius. I shall take the woman's oath.

Virginia. Icilius!

Icil. Fear not, love; a thousand oaths
 Will answer her.

App. You swear the girl's your child,
 And that you sold her to Virginius' wife,
 Who pass'd her for her own. Is that your oath?

Slave. It is my oath.

App. Your answer now, Virginius.

Virginius. Here it is! [Brings VIRGINIA forward.]

Is this the daughter of a slave? I know
 'Tis not with men, as shrubs and trees, that by
 The shoot you know the rank and order of
 The stem. Yet who from such a stem would look
 For such a shoot? My witnesses are these—
 The relatives and friends of Numitoria,
 Who saw her, ere Virginia's birth, sustain
 The burden which a mother bears, nor feels
 The weight, with longing for the sight of it!
 Here are the ears that listen'd to her sighs
 In nature's hour of labour, which subsides
 In the embrace of joy!—the hands, that when
 The day first look'd upon the infant's face,
 And never look'd so pleased, help'd her up to it,
 And thank'd the gods for her, and pray'd them send
 Blessing on blessing on her.—Here, the eyes
 That saw her lying at the generous
 And sympathetic fount, that at her cry

Sent forth a stream of liquid living pearl
To cherish her enamell'd veins. The lie
Is most abortive then, that takes the flower—
The very flower our bed connubial grew—
To prove its barrenness! Speak for me, friends;
Have I not spoke the truth?

Women and Citizens. You have, Virginius.

App. Silence!—Keep silence there! No more of that!
You're ever ready for a tumult, citizens. [*Troops appear behind.*]
Lictors, make way to let these troops advance.
We've had a taste of your forbearance, masters,
And wish not for another!

Virginius. Troops in the Forum!

App. Virginius, have you spoken?

Virginius. If you have heard me,
I have: if not, I'll speak again.

App. You need not,
Virginius; I have evidence to give,
Which, should you speak a hundred times again,
Would make your pleading vain.

Virginius. Your hand, Virginia!
Stand close to me.

[*Aside.*]

App. My conscience will not let me
Be silent. 'Tis notorious to you all,
That Claudius' father, at his death, declared me
The guardian of his son. This cheat has long
Been known to me. I know the girl is not
Virginius' daughter.

Virginius. Join your friends, Icilius,
And leave Virginia to my care.

[*Aside.*]

App. The justice
I should have done my client unrequired,
Now cited by him, how shall I refuse?

Virginius. Don't tremble, girl! don't tremble.

[*Aside.*]

App. Nay, Virginius,
I feel for you; but, though you were my father,
The majesty of justice should be sacred—
Claudius must take Virginia home with him.

Virginius. And if he must, I should advise him, Appius,
To take her home in time, before his guardian
Complete the violation, which his eyes
Already have begun—Friends! Fellow-citizens!
Look not on Claudius—Look on your decemvir!
Ho is the master claims Virginia!

The tongues that told him she was not my child
Are these—the costly charms he cannot purchase,
Except by making her the slave of Claudius—
His client!—purveyor!—that caters for
His pleasures—markets for him—picks, and scents,
And tastes, that he may banquet—serves him up
His sensual feast, and is not now ashamed,
In the open, common street, before your eyes—

Frighing your daughters' and your matrons' cheeks
 With blushes they ne'er thought to meet—to help him
 To the honour of a Roman maid!—my child!
 Who now clings to me, as you see, as if
 This second Tarquin had already coil'd
 His arms around her. Look upon her, Romans!
 Befriend her! Succour her! See her not polluted
 Before her father's eyes!—He is but one!
 Tear her from Appius and his lictors, while
 She is unstain'd. Your hands! your hands! your hands!

Cit. They're yours, Virinius.

App. Keep the people back!

Support my lictors, soldiers! Seize the girl,
 And drive the people back.

ICIL. Down with the slaves!

*[The people make a show of resistance, but, upon the
 advancing of the soldiers, retreat, and leave ICILIUS,
 VIRINIUS, and his daughter, &c., in the hands of
 APPIUS and his party.]*

Deserted!—Cowards! Traitors! Let me free
 But for a moment! I relied on you!
 Had I relied upon myself alone,
 I had kept them all at bay! I kneel to you—
 Let me but loose a moment, if 'tis only
 To rush upon your swords!

Virinius. Icilius, peace!

You see how 'tis! We are deserted, left
 Alone by our friends, surrounded by our enemies,
 Nerveless and helpless.

App. Take Icilius hence;
 Away with him!

ICIL. Tyrant!—Virginia!

[ICILIUS is forced off.]

App. Separate

Virinius and the girl!—Delay not, slaves.

Virinius. Let them forbear awhile, I pray you, Appius:
 It is not very easy. Though her arms
 Are tender, yet the hold is strong, by which
 She grasps me, Appius. Forcing them will hurt them.
 They'll soon unclasp themselves. Wait but a little:
 You know you're sure of her!

App. I have not time

To idle with thee; give her to my lictors.

Virinius. Appius, I pray you, wait! If she is not
 My child, she hath been like a child to me
 For fifteen years. If I am not her father,
 I have been like a father to her, Appius,
 For e'en so long a time. They that have lived
 For such a space together, in so near
 And dear society, may be allow'd
 A little time for parting! Let me take
 The maid aside, I pray you, to confer
 A moment with her nurse; perhaps she'll give me

Some token, will unloose a tie, so twined
And knotted round my heart, that if you break it
So suddenly, my heart breaks with it!

App. Well!

Look to them, lictors!

Virginia. Do you go from me!

Do you leave! Father! Father!

Virginus. No, my child;

No, my Virginia—come along with me.

Virginia. Will you not leave me? Will you take me with you?

Will you take me home again? O, bless you, bless you!

My father! my dear father! Art thou not

My father?

[*VIRGINIUS, perfectly at a loss what to do, looks anxiously around the Forum; at length his eye falls on a butcher's stall with a knife upon it.*

Virginus. This way, my Virginia! 'This way!

Virginia. Go

We home?

Virginus. Don't fear! Don't fear, I am not going
To leave thee, my Virginia! I'll not leave thee.

App. Keep back the people, soldiers! Let them not
Approach Virginus! Keep the people back!

[*VIRGINIUS seizes the knife.*

Well, have you done?

Virginus. Short time for converse, Appius;
But I have.

App. I hope you are satisfied.

Virginus. I am—

I am—that she is my daughter!

App. Take her, lictors!

[*VIRGINIA shrieks, and falls half-dead upon her father's shoulder.*

Virginus. Another moment, pray you. Bear with me
A little—"Tis my last embrace. "I won't try

Your patience beyond bearing, if you're a man!

Lengthen it as I may, I cannot make it

Long! My dear child! My dear Virginia! [*Kissing her.*

There is one only way to save thine honour—

"Tis this!—

[*Stabs her, and draws out the knife. ICILIUS breaks from the Soldiers that held him, and catches her.*

Lo! Appius! with this innocent blood,

I do devote thee to th' infernal gods!

Make way there!

App. Stop him! Seize him!

Virginus. If they dare

To tempt the desperate weapon, that is madden'd

With drinking my daughter's blood, why let them: thus

It rushes in amongst them. Way there! Way!

[*Goes out through the Soldiers.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Street.**Enter APPIUS and MARCUS.*

App. I do abjure all further league with them :
 They have most basely yielded up their power,
 And compromised their glory. Had they died
 In their high seats, they had lived demi-gods ;
 But now they live to die like basest men !
 Power gone, life follows ! Well ! 'tis well we know
 The worst ! The worst ?—The worst is yet to come ;
 And, if I err not, hither speeds a messenger
 Whose heel it treads upon ! Well, Vibulanus ?

Enter VIBULANUS, hastily, and other Decemvirs, with MARCUS.

Vibul. Honorius and Valerius are elected
 To the consulate.—Virginius is made tribune.

App. No doubt they'd snatch their offices, when ours
 Were laid so poorly down. You have acted wisely !

Vibul. Who could resist Virginius, raving at
 The head of the revolted troops, with all
 The commons up in arms ? Waste not dear time !
 Look to your safety, Appius. 'Tis resolved
 To cite you instantly before the consuls.

App. Look to my safety, say you ? You would bid
 A man, that's tumbling from a precipice
 A hundred fathoms high, and midway down,
 Look to his safety ! What has he to snatch at ?
 Air !—E'en so much have I.

Vibul. Withdraw awhile
 From Rome. We shall recall you with applause
 And honours.

App. Yes ! You saw me on the brink—
 Beheld it giving way beneath my feet—
 And saw me tottering o'er the hideous leap,
 Whose sight sent round the brain with madd'ning whirl,
 With but a twig to stay me, which you cut,
 Because it was your friend that hung by it—
 Most kindly !

Vibul. Nay, employ the present time
 In looking to your safety—that secured,
 Reproach us as you will.

App. I am in your hands,
 Lead me which way you please.

Icil. [without]. Hold ! Stand !

App. Icilius !

*ICILIUS enters, with HONORIUS and VALERIUS as Consuls,
 NUMITORIUS and Lictors.*

Icil. Did I not tell you 'twas the tyrant ? Look

Was I not right? I felt that he was present
Ere mine eye told it me.—You are our prisoner!

App. On what pretence, Icilius?

Icil. Ask of poor

Virginius, tottering between despair

And madness, as he seeks the home, where once

He found a daughter!

App. I demand due time

To make up my defence.

Icil. Demand due time!

Appius!—Assign the cause, why you denied

A Roman maid, of free condition,

Her liberty provisionally, while

Her plea remain'd unjudged. No answer, Appius?

Lictors, lay hold upon him—to prison with him!

Look to him well. To prison with the tyrant!

[*APPIUS and Lictors go out on one side; ICILIUS and*

NUMITORIUS on the other.]

Vibul. Let all his friends, that their own safety prize,

Solicit straight for his enlargement; doff

Their marks of station, and to the vulgar eye

Disguise it with the garb of mourning; 'twill

Conciliate the crowd. We know them well:

But humour them, they are water soon as fire!

[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE II.—*Virginius's House.*

Enter LUCIUS and SERVIA.

Luc. Is he not yet come home?

Servia. Not since her death.

I dread his coming home, good Lucius.

Luc. A step! 'Tis Numitorius and Virginius.

Servia. Gods! how he looks!—See, Lucius, how he looks!

Enter VIRGINIUS, attended by NUMITORIUS and others.

Virginius. 'Tis ease! 'Tis ease! I am content! 'Tis peace,

'Tis anything that is most soft and quiet.

And after such a dream!—I want my daughter;

Send me my daughter!

Num. Yes, his reason's gone.

Scarce had he come in sight of his once sweet

And happy home, ere with a cry he fell

As one struck dead.—When to himself he came,

We found him as you see. How is it, brother?

Virginius. How should it be but well? Our cause is good.

Think you Rome will stand by, and see a man

Robb'd of his child? We are bad enough, but yet

They should not so mistake us. We are slaves,

But not yet monsters.—Call my daughter to me.

What keeps her thus? I never stepp'd within
The threshold yet, without her meeting me
With a kiss. She's very long a-coming. Call her!

Num. Icilius comes! See, my Icilius, see!

Enter ICILIUS.

Virginus. Come, come, make ready. Brother, you and he
Go on before: I'll bring her after you.

Icil. Ha!

Num. My Icilius, what a sight is there!
Virginus' reason is a wreck, so stripp'd
And broken up by wave and wind, you scarce
Would know it was the gallant bark you saw
Riding so late in safety!

Icil. [*taking VIRGINIUS'S hand*]. Father! Father!
That art no more a father!

Virginus. Ha! what wet
Is this upon my hand? A tear, boy! Fie,
For shame! Is that the weapon you would guard
Your bride with? First essay what steel can do!

Num. Not a tear has bless'd his eye since her death! No
wonder.

The fever of his brain, that now burns out,
Has drunk the source of sorrow's torrents dry.

Icil. You would not have it otherwise? 'Twas fit
The bolt, that struck the sole remaining branch,
And blasted it, should set the trunk on fire!

Num. If we could make him weep—

Icil. Her urn!

'Twas that which first drew tears from me. I'll fetch it.
Yet scarcely think it wise, to wake a man
Who's at the mercy of a tempest! Better
You suffer him to sleep it through. [*ICILIUS goes out.*]

Virginus. Gather your friends together!—Tell them of
Dentatus' murder!—Screw the chord of rage
To the topmost pitch!—Mine own is not mine own! [*Laughs.*]
That's strange enough. Why does he not dispute
My right to my own flesh, and tell my heart
Its blood is not its own? He might as well!
But I want my child!

Enter LUCIUS.

Luc. Justice will be defeated.

Virginus. Who says that?

He lies in the face of the gods! She is immutable,
Immaculate, and immortal!—and though all
The guilty globe should blaze, she will spring up
Through the fire, and soar above the crackling pile,
With not a downy feather ruffled by
Its fierceness!

Num. He is not himself! What new
Oppression comes to tell us to our teeth,

We only mock'd ourselves to think the days
Of thralldom past?

Luc. The friends of Appius
Beset the people with solicitations.
The fickle crowd, that change with every change,
Begin to doubt and soften. Every moment
That's lost, a friend is lost. Appear among
Your friends, or lose them!

Num. Lucius, you
Remain, and watch Virginius.

[Goes out, followed by all but LUCIUS and SERVIA.]

Virginius. You remember,
Don't you, nurse?

Ser. What, Virginius?

Virginius. That she nursed
The child herself! Inquire among your gossips,
Which of them saw it; and, with such of them
As can avouch the fact, without delay
Repair to the Forum! Will she come or not?
I'll call myself!—She will not dare!—O when
Did my Virginia dare—Virginia!
Is it a voice, or nothing answers me?
I hear a sound so fine—there's nothing lives
'Twixt it and silence!

[Goes out, and almost immediately returns.]

Aha! She is not here!
They told me she was here—they have deceived me;
And Appius was not made to give her up,
But keeps her, and effects his wicked purpose,
While I stand talking here, and ask you if
My daughter is my daughter! Though a legion
Sentry'd that brothel, which he calls his palace,
I'd tear her from him!

Luc. Hold, Virginius! Stay!
Appius is now in prison.

Virginius. With my daughter!
He has secured her there! Ha! has he so?
Gay office for a dungeon! Hold me not,
Or I will dash you down, and spoil you for
My keeper. My Virginia, struggle with him!
Appal him with thy shrieks; ne'er faint, ne'er faint!
I am coming to thee! I am coming to thee!

*[VIRGINIUS rushes out, followed by LUCIUS, SERVIA,
and others.]*

SCENE III.—A Dungeon.

APPIUS discovered.

App. From the palace to the dungeon is a road
Tro'd oft—not oft retr'd. What hope have I

To pace it back again? I know of none.
 I am as one that's dead! The dungeon, that
 Encloses fallen greatness, may as well
 Be call'd its tomb. I am as much the carcass
 Of myself, as if the string were taken from
 My neck. Their hands long for the office! Oh,
 'Tis worth the half of a plebeian's life
 To get his greasy fingers on the throat
 Of a patrician! But I'll balk them. Come!
 Appius shall have an executioner
 No less illustrious than himself.

[He is on the point of swallowing poison, when VIBULANUS enters.]

Who's there?

Vibul. Your friend!

App. My Vibulanus!

Vibul. Appius, what

Was that, you hid in such confusion, as
 I enter'd?

App. 'Tis a draught for life, which swallow'd,
 She relishes so richly, that she cares not
 If she ne'er drink again! Here's health to you!

Vibul. Not out of such a cup as that, my Appius.
 Despair, that bids you drink it, as the cure
 Of canker'd life, but lies to you, and turns
 Your eyes from hope, that even now stands ready
 With outstretch'd arms to rush to your embrace.
 Your friends are busy for you with your foes!
 Your foes become your friends! Where'er a frown
 Appears against you, nothing's spared to make
 The wearer doff it, and put up a smile
 In its stead. Your colleague Oppius is in prison.
 Your client too. Their harm's your safety: it
 Distracts the appetite o' the dogs. They drop
 The morsel they took up before, as soon
 As a new one's thrown to them.

App. Thou givest me life
 Indeed!

Vibul. That I may give thee life indeed,
 I'll waste no longer time with thee; for that
 Already taken to assure thee of
 Thy fast-reviving fortunes, cheats them of
 The aid should help to re-establish them.
 Farewell, my Appius! If my absence takes
 A friend from thee, it leaves one with thee—Hope! *[Goes out.]*

App. And I will clasp it to me! Never friend
 Made sweeter promises! But snatch me from
 Beneath the feet of the vile herd, that's now
 Broke loose and roams at large; I'll show them who
 They'd trample on. Hope! Hope! They say of thee,
 Thou art a friend that promises, but cares not
 To keep his word. This once keep thine with Appius, I

And he will give thee out so true a tongue,
 Thy word is bond enough!—At liberty!
 Again at liberty! O give me power
 As well, for every minute of my thralldom
 I'll pick a victim from the common herd
 Shall groan his life in bondage. Liberty!
 'Tis triumph, power, dominion, eve'vthing!
 Are ye not open yet, ye servile gates?
 Let fall your chains, and push your bolts aside!
 It is your past and future lord commands you!

Virginius [*rushing in*]. Give me my daughter!

App. Ha!

Virginius. My child! my daughter!

My daughter! my Virginia! Give her me!

App. Thy daughter!

Virginius. Ay! Deny that she is mine,
 And I will strangle thee, unless the lie
 Should choke thee first.

App. Thy daughter!

Virginius. Play not with me!

Provoke me not! Equivocate, and lo!
 Thou sport'st with fire. I am wild!—distracted!—mad!—
 I am all a flame—a flame! I tell thee once
 For all, I want my child, and I will have her;
 So give her to me.

App. Caged with a madman! Hoa!
 Without there!

Virginius. Not a step thou stirr'st from hence,
 Till I have found my child. Attempt that noise
 Again, and I will stop the vent, that not
 A squeak shall pass it. There are plugs for you
 Will keep it air-tight [*showing his fingers*]. Please you, give
 me back
 My daughter.

App. In truth, she is not here, *Virginius*;
 Or I would give her to thee.

Virginius. Would! Ay, should!

Though would were would not. Do you say, indeed,
 She is not here? You nothing know of her?

App. Nothing, *Virginius*! good *Virginius*, nothing.

Virginius. How if I thrust my hand into your breast,
 And tore your heart out, and confronted it
 With your tongue? I'd like it!—Shall we try it? Fool!
 Are not the ruffians leagued? The one would swear
 To the tale o' the other.

App. By the gods, *Virginius*,
 Your daughter is not in my keeping.

Virginius. Well,

Then I must seek her elsewhere. I did dream
 That I had murder'd her—'Tis false! 'twas but
 A dream.—She isn't here, you say—Well! well!
 Then I must go and seek her elsewhere—Yet

She's not at home—and where else should I seek her
 But there or here? Here! here! here! Yes, I say,
 But there or here—I tell you I must find her—
 She must be here, or what do you here? What,
 But such a wonder of rich beauty could
 Deck out a dungeon so, as to despoil
 A palace of its tenant? Art thou not
 The tyrant Appius?—Didst thou not decree
 My daughter to be Claudius' slave, who gave her
 To his master? Have you not secured her here
 To compass her dishonour, ere her father
 Arrives to claim her?

App. No!

Virinius. Do you tell me so?

Vile tyrant! Think you, shall I not believe
 My own eyes before your tongue? Why, there she is!
 There, at your back—her looks dishevell'd and
 Her vestment torn! Her cheeks all faded with
 Her pouring tears, as flowers with too much rain!
 Her form no longer kept and treasured up
 By her maiden pride, like a rich casket, cast
 Aside, neglected and forgot, because
 The richer gem was shrined in it is lost!
 Villain! is this a sight to show a father?
 And have I not a weapon to requite thee?

[Searches about his clothes.]

Ha! here are ten!

App. Keep down your hands! Help! help!

Virinius. No other look but that! Look on! look on!

It turns my very flesh to steel—Brave girl!

Keep thine eye fix'd—let it not wink—look on!

[They go out, struggling.]

Enter NUMITORIUS, ICILIUS, LUCIUS, Guard, and Soldier,
bearing Virginia's urn.

Num. Not here!

Luc. Is this the dungeon?—Appius is not here,
 Nor yet Virinius. You have sure mistaken.

Guard. This is the dungeon—Here Virinius enter'd.

Num. Yet is not here!—Hush! The abode of death
 Is just as silent. Gods! should the tyrant take
 The father's life, in satisfaction for

The deed that robb'd him of the daughter's charms—
 Hush! hark! A groan! There's something stirs!

Luc. 'Tis this way!

Num. Come on! Protect him, gods, or pardon me
 If with my own hand I revenge his death.

[They go out.]

SCENE IV.—*Another Dungeon.*

VIRGINIUS *discovered on one knee, with APPIUS lying dead before him. Enter NUMITORIUS, ICILIUS, LUCIUS, Citizens, and others.*

Num. What's here? Virginius! with the tyrant prostrate and dead!

Luc. His senses are benumb'd! There is no adit to his mind, by which our words can reach it. Help to raise him. The motion may recall perception.

Num. His eye is not so deathlike fixed; it moves a little.

Luc. Speak to him, Numitorius; he knows your voice the best.

Num. Virginius!

Luc. I think he heeds you; speak again.

Num. Virginius!

Virginius. Ah!

Luc. That sigh has burst the spell which held him.

Num. Virginius! my dear brother!

Virginius. Lighter! lighter! My heart is ten times lighter! What a load it has heaved off! Where is he? I thought I had done it.

Num. Virginius!

Virginius. Well, who are you? What do you want? I'll answer what I've done!

Num. Do you not know me, brother? Speak, Icilius, try if he knows you.

Icil. Virginius!

Num. Try again.

Icil. Virginius!

Virginius. That voice—that voice—I know that voice! It minds me of a voice was coupled with it, And made such music, once to hear it was Enough to make it ever after be Remember'd!

[ICILIUS places the urn in his hand.

Ha! What's this?

Icil. Virginia!

[VIRGINIUS looks alternately at ICILIUS and the urn—looks at NUMITORIUS and LUCIUS—seems struck by his mourning—looks at the urn again—bursts into a passion of tears, and exclaims, "VIRGINIA!"—Falls on ICILIUS's neck. Curtain drops.

END OF VIRGINIUS.

EPILOGUE,

BY BARRY CORNWALL, ESQ.

SPOKEN BY MISS BRUNTON.

LEAVING the common path, which many tread,
We will not wake with jokes our poet dead;
Nor shame the young creations of his pen,
By bidding all, who've perish'd, be again.
The pale Virginia, in her bloody shroud,
Lies like a shrined saint.—Oh! then, aloud
Shall we break scurril jests, and bid depart
Those thoughts of her, which fill and teach the heart?
No moral now we offer, squared in form,
But Pity, like the sun-light, bright and warm,
Comes mix'd with showers; and, fading, leaves behind
A beauty and a blossom on the mind.
We do not strain to show that "thus it grows."
And "hence we learn" what everybody knows:
But casting idle dogmas (words) aside,
We paint a villain in his purple pride;
And tearing down a power, that grew too bold,
Show—merely what was done in days of old.
Leaving this image on the soul, we go
Unto our gentler story touch'd with woe
(With woe that wantons not, nor wears away
The heart), and love too perfect for decay.
But whatsoe'er we do, we will not shame
Your better feeling, with an idle game
Of grin and mimicry (a loathsome task);
Or strip the great Muse of her mighty mask,
And hoot her from her throne of tears and sighs,
Until from folly and base jest she dies.
No; let her life be long, her reign supreme—
If but a dream, it is a glorious dream.
Dwell then upon our tale; and bear along
With you, deep thoughts—of love—of bitter wrong—
Of freedom—of sad pity—and lust of pow'r.
The tale is fitted for an after-hour.

WILLIAM TELL:

A Play.

DEDICATED TO GENERAL MINA,

IN ADMIRATION

OF HIS PATRIOTISM, VALOUR, AND CONSTANCY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT DRURY LANE IN 1825.)

AUSTRIANS.

<i>Gesler</i>	{ Governor of the Waldestetten.. }	Mr. ARCHER.
<i>Sarnem</i>	his Lieutenant ..	Mr. THOMPSON.
<i>Struth</i>	his Seneschal....	Mr. GATTIE.
<i>Rodolph</i>	} his Castellains ..	Mr. COMER.
<i>Lutold</i>		Mr. HOWELL.
<i>Gerard</i>		Mr. FENTON.
<i>Braun</i>	{ Servant to the Se- neschal	Mr. KNIGHT.
<i>Anneli</i>	{ Step-daughter to the Seneschal.. }	Miss POVEY.
<i>Agnes</i>	her Cousin.....	Mrs. YATES.

Archers, &c. &c. &c.

SWISS.

<i>William Tell</i>....	.....	Mr. MACREADY.
<i>Albert</i>	his Son	Miss C. FISHER.
<i>Melchtal</i>	Erni's Father....	Mr. YOUNG.
<i>Erni</i>	} Patriots in league with Tell	Mr. WEBSTER.
<i>Furst</i>		Mr. ARMSTRONG.
<i>Verner</i>		Mr. MERCER.
<i>Waldman</i>	{ a Burgher of Al- torf	Mr. HUGHES.
<i>Michael</i>	his Son	Mr. WALLACK.
<i>Jagheli</i>	Michael's Friend	Mr. PENLEY.
<i>Pierre</i>	} Inhabitants of Altorf	Mr. YARNOLD.
<i>Theodore</i>		Mr. O. SMITH.
<i>Savoyards</i> .....	.....	Master EDMONDS.
		Mr. FITZWILLIAM.
		Mr. FOSTER.
<i>Emma</i>	Tell's Wife.....	Mrs. BUNN.

Burghers, Mountaineers, Women, &c.

SCENE, ALTORF AND THE NEIGHBOURING MOUNTAINS.

WILLIAM TELL.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Outside of the Castle of Altorf.—Alpine Scenery in the Background.*

Enter WALDMAN and MICHAEL.

Wal. Don't tell me, Michael! Thou dost lead a life
As bootless as a jester's—worse than his,
For he has high retaining. Every one
Calls thee his fool—the gallant and the boy,
The gentle-born and base! Thy graceless name
Is ever tagg'd to feasts, and shows, and games,
And saucy brawls, which men as young as thou
Discourse of with grave looks. What comes of this?
Will't make thee rich? Will't give thee place in life?
Will't buy thee honour, friendship, or esteem?
Will't get thee reverence 'gainst grey hairs?

Mic. Good father!—

Wal. The current of thy life doth counter run
To that of other men's. Thy spirits, which
Were reason in thee, when thou wast a child,
As tameless still, now thou'rt become a man,
Are folly! Thriftless life, that may be call'd
More rational, when in the nurse's lap,
Than when in manhood's chair. Survey those towers,
And act the revel o'er of yesternight!
Think of the tyrants whom they lodge, and then
Link hands with fools and braggarts o'er their wine!
Fancy the sounds their dungeons hear, and tell
Of such and such a joke of thine, that made
Thy wanton comrades roar!

Mic. Dear father!

Wal. Pshaw!

Thou canst not try to speak with gravity,
But one perceives thou wagg'st an idle tongue!
Thou canst not try to look demure, but, spite
Of all thou dost, thou show'st a laugher's cheek!
Thou canst not e'en essay to walk sedate,
But in thy very gait one sees the wag,
That's ready to break out in spite of all
Thy seeming!

Mic. I'm a melancholy man,

That can't do that which with good will I would !
I pray thee, father, tell me what will change me ?

Wal. Hire thyself to a sexton, and dig graves.
Never keep company but at funerals.

Beg leave to take thy bed into the church,
And sleep there. Fast, until thine abstinence
Upbraid the anchorite with gluttony.
And when thou talk'st reflection, feast on naught
But water and stale bread. Ne'er speak, except
At prayers and grace ; and as to music, be
Content with ringing of the passing-bell
When souls do go to their account.

Mic. But if
The bells, that ring as readily for joy
As grief, should chance to ring a merry peal,
And they should drop the corse—

Wal. Then take the rope,
And hang thyself. I know no other way
To change thee.

Mic. Nay, I'll do some great feat yet.

Wal. You'll do some great feat ! Take me Gesler's castle !

Mic. Humph ! that would be a feat, indeed ! I'll do it !

Wal. You'll do it ? You'll get married, and have children,
And be a sober citizen, before
You pare your bread o' the crust ! You'll do it ? You'll
Do nothing ! Live until you are a hundred,
When death shall catch you, 'twill be laughing. Do it ?
Look grave, talk wise, live sober, thou wilt do
A harder thing, but that thou'lt never do. [*WALDMAN goes out.*]

Mic. Hard sentence, that ! Dame Nature ! gentle mother,
If thou hast made me of too rich a mould
To bring the common seed of life to fruit,
Is it a fault ? Kind Nature, I should lie
To say it was. Who would not have an eye
To see the sun, where others see a cloud ?
A skin so temper'd as to feel the rain,
Gave other men the ague, him refresh'd ?
A frame so vernal, as, in spite of snow,
To think it's genial summer all year round ;
And bask himself in bleak December's scowl,
While others sit and shiver o'er a hearth ?
His worship's self, I've heard, when he was young—
Some fifty years ago—was even such
A man ! Shall I upbraid my heart because
It hath been so intent to keep me in
An ample revenue of precious mirth,
It hath forgot to hoard the duller coin
That worldlings trade on ? No, not I, no more
Than I would empt my coffers of their gold,
Were they so furnish'd, to make room for brass ;
Or disenthroned the diamond of my ring—
Supposed the gemméd toy my finger wore—

To seat a sparkless pebble in its place!
 Yet here comes that, despite my wealth of mirth,
 Can make a beggar of me! Father, could
 You see me now, you'd find me *sans* a smile
 In all my jester's scrip!

Enter GESLER's Archers, escorting some Swiss Peasants, prisoners; they cross the Stage, and enter the Porch of the Castle, —TELL, at a short distance, following them.

Tell. [*To MICHAEL, who is looking after them as they enter the porch.*] Do you know them?

Mic. No.

Tell. Nor I, thank Heaven! How like you that?

Mic. What?

Tell. That.

Mic. I like it not.

Tell. It might as well be you or I.

Mic. It might.

Tell. Do you live in Altorf?

Mic. Yes.

Tell. How go they on

In Altorf?

Mic. As you see. What was a sight
 A month ago, hath not the wonder now
 To draw them 'cross the threshold!

Tell. Would you like—

Mic. What wouldst thou say to me?

Tell. No matter, friend.

Something so slight, that in the thinking on't
 'Twas gone. The field of Grutli, Tell!—The hour's
 At hand. The spirits are expecting thee,
 Shall bring thy country back the times again
 She'd wonder this to see!

Mic. Stay, friend! a word.

If of my mind thou haply art, and think'st,
 When fortune will not make us theme of mirth,
 Ourselves may take the task in hand—

Tell. For mirth!—

Good day!

[*Exit hastily.*]

Mic. Acquaintance briefly broke as made!
 Take Gesler's castle, did my father say?
 Would I were well within the ramparts, and
 At large as now! I might do such a thing.
 Soft! Who comes here? Jagheli! Ha! a youth,
 That's tender as a love-sick damsel's sigh.
 What brings him sighing here? The Seneschal
 Has a fair daughter! Friend Jagheli, mind
 Thy secret. Half on't I have got already
 Without thy leave; the rest thyself shalt give me.

[*Retires.*]

Enter JAGHELI and three Savoyards, with guitars.

Jag. You know the air, I'm sure. 'Tis very sweet:
 The young musician who composed it loved;

But 'twas a bootless flame! You must have heard
 The story? It is said he taught the lady,
 Who was of high degree, and made that strain
 To sing to her the love he dared not speak:—
 Don't you remember it? The sequel was
 A mournful one! The lady liked the strain,
 But did not see the tender minstrel's drift;
 And still she'd have him sing it, which he did
 With pining heart, o'er hopeless labour breaking!
 He sung it till he died!—and then, at last,
 The lady found his theme; when, strange to tell!
 With sweet contrition she dissolved away,
 And ne'er press'd bridal bed, save the cold one
 They made for her beside him! Draw thy hand
 Across the strings, and wake thy saddest chord:
 Perchance 'twill mind me of it. Thou hast hit it!
 See if the rhymes I've strung for it agree.

[MICHAEL listens at the back of the stage, unseen by
 JAGHELI and Savoyards.

AIR.—SAVOYARDS.

Lady, you're so heavenly fair!
 Though to love is madness, still:
 Who beholds you can't forbear,
 But adores against his will.

Reason warms the heart in vain!
 Headlong passion won't obey!
 Hope's deceived, and sighs again!
 Love's abjured, yet holds its sway!

Mic. I pray you, have the ditty o'er again!
 Of all the strains that mewing minstrels sing,
 The lover's one for me! I could expire
 To hear a man, with bristles on his chin,
 Sing soft, with upturn'd eyes, and arch'd brows,
 Which talk of trickling tears, that never fall,
 And through the gamut whine his tender pain;
 While A and B and C such anguish speak,
 As never lover felt for mistress lost.
 Let's have the strain again!

Jag. To make thee mirth?
 When I'm thy lackey, honest Michael, I'll
 Provide thee music. There, with thanks to boot.

[Gives money to Savoyards, who go out.]

I am not in thy pay.

Mic. No; but I mean
 To take thee into it. Wilt thou hire with me?
 Nay, hang thy coyness, man! Why, thinkest thou
 Thou art the only man in Altorf knows
 The Seneschal has a fair daughter?

Jag. Fair
 Or not, she's nought to me.

Mic. Indeed? Oh, then,
I'll tell her so!

Jag. You do not know her?

Mic. No;

For any profit it can bring to thee.

I pray thee, tell me, hath she not black teeth?

Jag. Thou know'st 'twould take the pearl to challenge them!

Mic. Her nose, I think, is somewhat set awry?

Jag. It sits like dignity on beauty's face!

Mic. Her hair is a dull black?

Jag. 'Tis shining gold!

Mic. Her figure's squat?

Jag. Betwixt the full and slim—

A mould where vie the richest charms of both!

Mic. Well, then, she hobbles in her gait?

Jag. She moves the light and flexile chamois—

If you could lend the chamois her beauty,

And add to that her modest stateliness!

Mic. You are a hopeful painter, sir! How well

You've drawn the daughter of the Seneschal!

Jag. Good Michael, thou'rt a jester; but thou'rt kind.

Thy mirth doth feast at every man's expense;

Yet with such grace of frankest confidence,

That none begrudge thee. Wilt thou be my friend?

I love the daughter of the Seneschal;

Help me to see her.

Mic. Come to church with me

Next Sunday.

Jag. I was there last Sunday, Michael—

And Sunday before last—and Sunday, too,

Preceding that. I ne'er miss church, for there

I see the daughter of the Seneschal.

Mic. How wondrously devout thou'rt grown of late!

They say there is a young man in the church

That has his prayers by heart—unless, indeed,

He reads them in a certain angel's face;

On which he looks, and says them word for word,

From end to end, nor e'er is seen to turn.

To other page. Can it be thou they mean?

Thou'lt have a name for most rare sanctity!

Jag. Good Michael, canst thou help me?

Mic. If I knew

The lady.

Jag. What! dost thou not know her, then,

With what impediments is love environ'd!

Mic. Why, that's love's gain! It would not else be love.

Love's the impediments that lovers meet;

Or wherefore sing it, as your poets do,

A thing that lives in plots and stratagems?

They know not love who need but woo to wed,

But they who fain would wed, but dare not woo!

That's to be sound in love—to feel it from

The heart's deep centre to the fingers' ends !
 As sweetest fruit is that which is forbid,
 So fairest maid is she that is withheld.
 Whene'er I fall in love, I'll pick a maid
 Whose sire has vow'd her to a nunnery ;
 And she shall have, moreover, for her warders,
 Two maiden aunts, past wooing ; and to these
 I'll add an abigail, who has stood bridesmaid
 To twenty younger cousins, yet has ne'er
 Been ask'd herself ; and under her I'll set
 A male retainer of the family,
 For twenty years or more, as surly as
 A mastiff on the chain ; and, that my fair
 May lack no sweet provocative of love,
 Her tempting lattice shall be grated, and
 Her bower shall be surrounded with a wall
 Full ten feet high, on which an iron row
 Of forked shrubs shall stand and frown on me :
 And then I'll be a lover !

Jag. Show me how

Thou'dst win thy love by winning mine for me.

Mic. Hush ! here's the servant of the Seneschal ;
 A dog he sends on errands, without brains
 To take them half a yard ? What wouldst attempt
 To win the daughter of the Seneschal ?
 Wouldst enter Gesler's castle ?

Jag. Yes !

Mic. The man—

The very man for me !—Aside, and mark !

[*They retire.*]

Enter BRAUN, from Porch.

Bra. Three yards of buckram—Right ! Thread thereunto—
 But how much thread ?—A hank ? A hank's too much
 To sew three yards of buckram ! It must be
 A skein. A skein it is !—Right there. What next ?
 Twelve buckles with the straps—That is, twelve straps,
 Oh, very right ! In the fourth place, a score
 Of needles—Twenty needles to the score.
 I'm right again, by that ! And lastly—What
 Comes lastly ? Something is behind, I know,
 For I bethought me of my fingers, to

Enter Seneschal.

Remember, there were five things I should get ;
 And what's the fifth ? Or have I counted wrong ?
 There's buckram, one—thread, two—a skein of thread,
 Twelve buckles, and the straps—The straps and they
 Do go together—three : the fourth thing is
 A score of needles. There's my little finger
 Remaining yet. I'd give my hand to know
 For what that finger stands.

Sen. What stands it for ?

Bra. Dear master!

Sen. Dolt!

Bra. Kind master!

Sen. Jackanapes!

What stands it for?

Bra. I'll tell, but give me time.

Sen. What time? a day? a week? a month? a year?

Or till my daughter's dead?

Bra. I was to fetch
A leech to cure your daughter.

Sen. Wast thou so?

Wilt thou forget again? [*Shaking his cane at him.*]

Bra. No, sir!

Sen. Thou wilt!

Or that, or something else.

Bra. Indeed, sir, no!

Sen. Then say thy errand o'er again! Say't out!

See thou are right in every tittle on't,

Or look to't. Now!

Bra. Three yards of buckram—

Sen. No!

Begin with the leech.

Bra. I set the leech against

My little finger, sir.

Sen. Begin with him!

Bra. My little finger, sir, stands for the leech.

Sen. I say, begin with the leech!

Bra. I will! I will!

Well, then, the leech. I go to bring him to

My lady, your daughter; for she's sick.

Sen. Go on.

Mic. [*Aside to JAGHELI.*] Jagheli, thou must play the leech!

Away!

[*JAGHELI goes out.*]

Sen. Go on.

Bra. Three yards of buckram, I'm to fetch;

Twelve buckles and the straps; and to conclude,

A score of needles.

Sen. [*Striking him.*] Rascal, where's the thread?

To sew the buckram? Bring'st thou needles, fool!

And not the thread? Eh, starling? Eh? Wilt sew

The buckram without thread?

Mic. [*Coming forward, and striking him.*] Eh? rascal! Eh?

Heard ever mortal man the like of this?

Eh, platter! tankard! nightcap! good for naught

Except to eat, and drink, and sleep! Forget

Thy errand! Serve thy worthy master thus!

Thy patient master! thy kind master!—Get

Three meals a day, thy lodging, clothing, hire,

And civil words to boot; and yet not be

Trustworthy to the fetching of a skein

Of thread! Eh! Stomach!—Master Seneschal,

I'll run your errand straight. A leech; three yards

Of buckram; thread; a skein; a gross of needles—
Bring needles without thread! Eh? gullet!—and
A dozen buckles with the straps.

Sen. Good lad!

What art thou, prithee?

Mic. Sir, a sober youth,
Son to a worthy burgher of the town;
Was brought up in a monastery, has
Read Greek and Latin, knows to cast accounts,
And writes a hand as good as any clerk's
In Altorf, sir, with sundry other gifts,
As people say, but which 'twere not discreet
In me to speak of.

Sen. Why, a modest lad.
Dost want a service?

Mic. Not as varlets want
A service, sir, who let their duty out
For coin; I have enough: but I would serve
For love at any time, especially
The Seneschal of Altorf. Shall I run
Your errand?

Sen. Why, a model of a youth!
Thou shalt. Give him the money, sir.

Bra. The money!

Mic. Ay, Sit-over-meals! can I provide the things
Without the money?

Sen. Rascal, where's the money?

Bra. I put it in this pocket, sir, I'm sure
I put it in this pocket!

Sen. Empty it, sir.

Mic. [*Searching the pocket.*] What's this?
A crust of cheese! O ne'er-content!

Sen. Well! where is it?

Bra. Or could it be in this?

Sen. Out with't.

Mic. [*Searching the other pocket.*] What's here? a head of
garlic, and

A capon's leg! O cormorant!

Sen. The money!

Bra. Yes, sir!

Sen. Thy vest, try that! The money, sirrah!

Bra. Good sir, this instant!

Sen. Instant, dog! Wilt swear
Thou'lt find it in an hour?

Mic. Or in a day.

Eh? lack-grace! knave! incorrigible knave,
To chafe so sweet a temper'd gentleman—
What's that thou keep'st the last three fingers of
Thy careful hand upon?

Bra. The money!—There's
The money.

Sen. Give it him! [*Opens his hand slowly, and shows the money.*]

Mic. A patch, a rag,
The tatter of a serving man! To carry
His master's money in his greasy hand,
Or think of thrusting it into his poke—
Receptacle of musty eatables—
Cheese, garlic, scraps of meat, to wit; instead
Of lodging't in a safe and comely purse.
I'll run your errand, sir. Three yards of buckram;
A skein of thread; a score of needles, and
Twelve buckles with straps; not to forget
To bring a leech to cure your daughter, sir.
A turnspit cur—I'll run your errand, sir!
[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE II.—*The Field of Grutli.—A Lake and Mountains.*

Enter TELL, with a long bow.

Tell. Ye crags and peaks, I'm with you once again!
I hold to you the hands you first beheld,
To show they still are free. Methinks I hear
A spirit in your echoes answer me,
And bid your tenant welcome home, again!
Hail!—Hail! O sacred forms, how proud you look!
How high you lift your heads into the sky!
How huge you are! how mighty, and how free!
How do you look, for all your baréd brows,
More gorgeously majestical than kings
Whose loaded coronets exhaust the mine!
Ye are the things that tower—that shine—whose smile
Makes glad—whose frown is terrible—whose forms,
Robed or unrobed, do all the impress wear
Of awe divine—whose subject never kneels
In mockery, because it is your boast
To keep him free! Ye guards of liberty,
I'm with you once again!—I call to you
With all my voice! I hold my hands to you
To show they still are free! I rush to you
As though I could embrace you!

Erni [without]. William! William!

Tell. [Looks out.] Here, Erni, here!

Enter ERNI.

Erni. Thou'rt sure to keep the time,
That comest before the hour.

Tell. The hour, my friend,
Will soon be here. O, when will liberty
Be here? My Erni, that's my thought, which still
I find beside. Scaling yonder peak,
I saw an eagle wheeling near its brow:
O'er the abyss his broad expanded wings

Lay calm and motionless upon the air,
 As if he floated there without their aid,
 By the sole act of his unlorded will,
 That buoy'd him proudly up. Instinctively
 I strung my bow; yet kept he rounding still
 His airy circle, as in the delight
 Of measuring the ample range beneath,
 And round about, absorb'd, he heeded not
 The death that threaten'd him!—I could not shoot!—
 'Twas liberty. I turn'd the shaft aside,
 And let him soar away!
Verner [without]. Tell!—Tell!

Enter VERNER.

Tell. Here, Verner!
Furst [without]. Tell!

Enter FURST.

Tell. Here, friends!—Well met!—Do we go on?

Ver. We do.

Tell. Then you can reckon on the friends you named?

Ver. On every man of them.

Furst. And I on mine.

Erni. Not one I sounded, but doth rate his blood
 As water in the cause! Then fix the day
 Before we part.

Ver. No, Erni: rather wait

For some new outrage to amaze and rouse
 The common mind, which does not brood so much
 On wrongs gone by, as it doth rankle with
 The sense of present ones.

Tell. [To Verner.] I wish with Erni,
 But I think with thee. Yet when I ask myself
 On whom the wrong shall light for which we wait—
 Whose vineyard they'll uproot—whose flocks they'll ravage—
 Whose threshold they'll profane—whose hearth pollute—
 Whose roof they'll fire?—When this I ask myself;
 And think upon the blood of pious sons,
 The tears of venerable fathers, and
 The shrieks of mothers, fluttering round their spoil'd
 And nestless young—I almost take the part
 Of generous indignation, that o'erboils
 At such expense to wait on sober prudence!

Furst. Yet it is best.

Tell. On that we're all agreed!
 Who fears the issue when the day shall come?

Ver. Not I!

Furst. Nor I!

Erni. Nor I!

Tell. I'm not the man
 To mar this harmony—Nor I, no more
 Than any of you! You commit to me

The warning of the rest. Remember, then,
My dagger sent to any one of you—
As time may press—is word enough. The others
I'll see myself. Our course is clear.—Dear Erni,
Remember me to Melchtal.—Furst, provide,
What store you can of arms. Do you the same.

[*To ERNI and VERNER.*]

The next aggression of the tyrant is
The downfall of his power?—Remember me
To Melchtal, Erni:—to my father. Tell him
He has a son that was not born to him!
Farewell!—When next we meet upon this theme,
All Switzerland shall witness what we do!

[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE III.—*A Chamber in the inside of the Castle, with
an open window.*

Enter ANNELI and AGNES.

Ann. Art sure thou heard'st him?

Agn. Do I hear you, coz?

As sure did I hear him, and see him, too,
From yonder casement.

Ann. Sweet! look out again!
Perhaps he lingers there.

Agn. I wonder, cousin,
You'd send another's eyes to look for that
You'd give your own to see! You silly thing!
Look out yourself.

[*They go to the window.*]

Ann. Ah, sweet! look out for me!
For should he not be there, 'twill pain me less
To miss him by your eyes than by my own.
In sooth, you've set my heart a beating so,
I know not, coz, if I have ears or eyes
To see or hear him!

Agn. Well, lend me your hand,
To help me up. [*ANNELI assists AGNES to climb up to the
casement.*] Dear love, you tremble so
You'll pull me down! Oh, silly, silly thing,
To be so scared at what you so desire!

Ann. Fear, coz, you know, is offspring to desire.

Agn. A gentle mother to a froward child!
Love finds out wonders, coz; but find not I
The thing I look for. No; he is not there.

Ann. Nay, look again.

Agn. I cannot make him there
By looking, coz—Could you?

Ann. I would I could!
I'd look my eyes blind till he came.

Agn. Indeed !
And see him then ?

Ann. And see him then ! The thought
That I might see him then would bring me back
My sight.

Agn. It would ! oh, wonder-working love !
I would not have you risk your sight, dear coz ;
But I would have you try another thing,
You'd run no risk to lose, unless they wrong
Our sex, who say its voice is lasting as
'Tis sweet. Sing, coz ! He'll hear and come. Come, sing.

Ann. Sing, coz !

Agn. Ay, sing !

Ann. Am I not sick ?—confined
To my own chamber—sick, coz—doubly sick—
For hate of one I would not wed ; for love
Of one I would ? Have they not sent just now
To bring the leech to see me ? And you'd have
Me sing ! Oh, thoughtless coz !

Agn. For too much thought !
Never at rest to do my cousin good.
Did I not bid thee hate the Castellain,
When thou didst say thou couldst not love him, coz ?
Did I not bid thee love the burgher's son,
When thou didst say thou ne'er couldst love but him ?
And when thy father swore he'd have thee wed,
And thou didst vow thou'dst sooner die than wed !
Did I not bid thee, coz, fall sick at once,
And die ? And now, when to the casement comes
The man thou'dst wish the casement, door, and all,
Were open to ; would I not have thee sing,
To let him know there's neither bolt nor bar ?
He'd wish to draw in love and honesty,
You'd wish him not ? But, cousin, as you say
You're sick, and as for your sweet health 'tis good
That others think so, I'll try and e'en
Sing for you, coz.

AIR.—AGNES.

O well you ride, Sir Knight, O well
Your courser you bestride ;
But you'd ride better could you tell
Who sees you as you ride—
Not your lady, Sir Knight—not your lady, Sir Knight,
But her father, who wishes you far out of sight.

O well you sing, Sir Knight, O well
Your ditty you rehearse ;
But you'd sing better could you tell
Who lists your tender verse.—
Not your lady, Sir Knight—not your lady, Sir Knight,
But your rival, who's fretting and fuming for spite.

O well you climb, Sir Knight, O well

You climb to your lady's bower;

But you'd climb better could you tell

Who sees you scale the tower.

'Tis your lady, Sir Knight—'tis your lady, Sir Knight,

Who wishes the tower was not half the height.

O fast you fly, Sir Knight, O fast

You urge your laden steed;

But you'd ride slower, if you guess'd

How little is the need.

They have turn'd to the left—you've taken the right,

And you should be wedding, not riding, Sir Knight.

Enter the SENESCHAL.

Sen. How now! What's this? Ha! Singing at the casement?

Agn. To please my cousin, sir.

Sen. How? Anneli!

Agn. I coax'd her from her chamber. Change, they say, is physic to the sick, when medicine more costly's virtueless!

Sen. And who made thee

A doctor?

Agn. Nature!

Sen. Nature? Yes, I doubt not

'Twas nature taught thee change was good! it is

Thy sex's universal remedy—

Physic they swallow without making faces,

Anneli!

Ann. Sir?

Sen. Art better, girl?

Ann. No, sir.

Sen. Better or worse I'll have thee soon. The leech will straight be here—He should be coming now. Thy chamber!

Ann. [To AGNES.] Should he find I am not ill!

Agn. He'll find he's not a ducat richer by it,

So never fear!—He'll find thee very ill.

If thou'rt not well until he makes thee so,

Thou shalt be sick, coz, to thy heart's content!

[ANNELI goes out.]

Sen. Agnes.

Agn. Yes, sir.

Sen. What says thy cousin?

Agn. Nought.

Sen. What didst thou say to her?

Agn. I told her, sir,

To keep her heart up, and not fear the leech.

Sen. Not fear the leech!

Agn. E'er since you spoke of him, She has done nothing, sir, but talk of lancets, Caustics, and blisters; powders, nauseous draughts,

With fifty other shocking things, that much
I fear me, sir, she will feign well, to cheat
The leech.

Sen. Ha! think'st thou so?

Agn. I'm sure on't, sir.

She has been practising e'er since you named him.

Sen. I thought she look'd much better!

Agn. Better, sir!

She's worse, much worse! The mischief's inward, sir.

In short, she's dying—dying, sir: and yet

She'd sooner die than undergo the leech.

Sen. Ne'er fear, ne'er fear! She shall not cheat him so.

I'll not believe him, though he says she's well.

I'll make him think her ill. No drug he has

But shall be fully tried on her. His pills,

Emplastrums, ointments, julaps, cataplasms,

Shall take their turn with her; and if these fail,

We'll bring his knives and lancets to her; nor,

When all is done, shall he give o'er, until

She's well again, and weds the Castellain

Enter BRAUN.

Braun. The leech is here, sir.

Enter MICHAEL, with JAGHELI, disguised as a Leech.

Mic. Sir, I've brought the gentleman,

And all the articles you bade me get.

Sen. Good lad, and active!

Welcome, sir! Methinks

He's very young. Art sure he is a leech?

Mic. A leech, sir! Ay, and such a one!—There's not
His fellow to be found in Altorf, sir.

Remember, sir, it is the use of time,

Not time itself, that's written in our looks.

Forty is younger far than twenty, sir,

When that sees husbanding, but this does not.

But never take my word for't! Only try

His lancet—Do, sir—'Tis miraculous

How skilfully he can phlebotomize.

No scratch, sir, prick of a pin, or flea-bite, sir,

But real blade-work. Let him bleed you, sir!

Sen. On second looks, methinks he's not

So young.

Mic. Past forty, sir.

Sen. Past forty! Come,

Take ten from that.

Mic. Ten, sir!—I pray you, lady,

Provide a ribbon for the Seneschal,

And something soft to make a compress of.

Ten do you say, sir? Ten? Ten years ago

He bled and blister'd me—I'll show you, sir,

The mark of his lancet.

[AGNES goes out.]

Sen. Nay, good youth, don't strip
Thy sleeve!

Mic. Strip yours, then, sir, and let him try
His skill upon you. Fetch a basin, rascal! [*BRAUN goes out.*
'Twill do you good, sir. For a healthy man,
You're over-full of blood. To lose a little
Will benefit you much. Your cheek's a tint
Too florid, sir. There's indigestion in't,
Which breeds vertigo; for preventing which [*Getting a chair.*
There's nothing like the breathing of a vein.

Re-enter AGNES, with a ribbon, &c.; BRAUN, with a basin.

Mic. Sit down, sir.

Sen. Nay, good lad!—

[*Sits.*

Mic. Good master leech,

Your case of instruments, wherein you store
Your lancets, scalpels, and your scarifiers—
The Seneschal wants bleeding.

Sen. No, no, no!

[*Rises up and runs.*

I am content that he's a man of skill.

Mic. Just let him take a single ounce of blood,
To see how he can use a lancet, sir.

Sen. I tell thee, no!—I'm sure he is a leech,—

Mic. But half an ounce.

Sen. Good youth, I would not wrong
The worthy man, by asking him to take
A single drop. I'm sure he is a leech!
One needs but look at him to know that he
Can bleed; and for his years, to see him close,
He's far from young; past forty, at the least.
Good sir, put up your case of instruments,
And come along with me to see my daughter.
And, Agnes, give this youth a cup of wine,
With what you have that's best, to relish it.
A most sagacious leech, I'm sure!—A leech
Than whom none ever better look'd his calling. [*They go out.*

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*TELL'S Cottage on the right of a Mountain—a distant view of a Lake, backed by Mountains of stupendous height, their tops covered with snow, and lighted at the very points by the rising Sun, the rest of the distance being yet in shade—on one side a Vineyard.*

Enter EMMA, from the Cottage.

Emma. O, the fresh morning! Heaven's kind messenger,
That never empty-handed comes, to those

Who know to use its gifts.—Praise be to him
 Who loads it still, and bids it constant run
 The errand of his bounty!—Praise be to him!
 We need his care that on the mountain's cliff
 Lodge by the storm, and cannot lift our eyes,
 But piles on piles of everlasting snows,
 O'erhanging us, remind us of his mercy!

ALBERT appears on an eminence.

Alb. My mother!

Emma. Albert!

Alb. [*Descending.*] Bless thee!

Emma. Bless thee, Albert!

How early were you up?

Alb. Before the sun.

Emma. Ay, strive with him. He never lies a-bed

When it is time to rise. He ever is

The constant'st workman, that goes through his task,

And shows us how to work by setting to't

With smiling face; for labour's light as ease

To him that toils with cheerfulness. Be like

The sun.

Alb. What you would have me like, I'll be like,

As far as will to labour join'd, can make me.

Emma. Well said, my boy! Knelt you when you got up
 To-day?

Alb. I did; and do so every day!

Emma. I know you do! And think you, when you kneel,
 To whom you kneel?

Alb. To HIM who made me, mother.

Emma. And in whose name?

Alb. The name of Him who died

For me and all men, that all men and I,

By trust in him, might live.

Emma. Remember that!

Forget all things but that—remember that!

'Tis more than friends or fortune; clothing, food;

All things of earth; yea, life itself. It is

To live when these are gone, where they are nought

With God!—My son, remember that!

Alb. I will!

Emma. You have been early up, when I, that play'd

The sluggard, in comparison, am up

Full early; for the highest peaks alone,

As yet, behold the sun. Now tell me what

You ought to ponder, when you see the sun

So shining on the peak?

Alb. That as the peak

Feels not the pleasant sun, or feels it least!

So they, who highest stand in fortune's smile,

Are gladden'd by it least, or not at all!

Emma. The lesson that remember'd pays the teacher!
And what's the profit you should turn this to?

Alb. Rather to place my good in what I have;
Than think it worthless, wishing to have more;
For more is not more happiness, so oft
As less.

Emma. I'm glad you husband what you learn.
That is the lesson of content, my son;
He who finds which, has all—who misses—nothing!

Alb. Content is a good thing.

Emma. A thing, the good
Alone can profit by.

Alb. My father's good.

Emma. What say'st thou, boy?

Alb. I say my father's good.

Emma. Yes; he is good! What then?

Alb. I do not think

He is content—I'm sure he's not content;
Nor would I be content, were I a man,
And Gesler seated on the rock of Altorf!
A man may lack content, and yet be good.

Emma. I did not say *all* good men find content.—
I would be busy; leave me.

Alb. You're not angry?

Emma. No, no, my boy.

Alb. You'll kiss me?

Emma. Will I not!

The time will come you will not ask your mother
To kiss you!

Alb. Never!

Emma. Not when you're a man?

Alb. I would not be a man to see that time:

I'd rather die, now that I am a child,

Than live to be a man, and not love you!

Emma. Live—live to be a man, and love your mother!

[*They embrace—ALBERT runs off into the cottage.*]

Why should my heart sink? 'tis for this we rear them!

Cherish their tiny limbs; pine if a thorn

But mar their tender skin; gather them to us

Closer than miser hugs his bag of gold;

Bear more for them than slave, who makes his flesh

A casket for the rich purloined gem—

To send them forth into a wintry world

To brave its flaws and tempests!—They must go;

Far better, then, they go with hearty will!

Be that my consolation.—Nestling as

He is, he is the making of a bird

Will own no cowering wing. 'Twas fine—'Twas fine

To see my eaglet, on the verge o' the nest,

Ruffling himself at sight of the huge gulf

He feels anon he'll have the wing to soar!

Re-enter ALBERT from the Cottage, with a bow and arrows, and a rude target, which he sets up during the first lines, laying his bow and quiver on the ground.

What have you there?

Alb. My bow and arrows, mother.

Emma. When will you use them like your father, boy?

Alb. Some time, I hope.

Emma. You brag! There's not an archer
In all Helvetia can compare with him!

Alb. But I'm his son; and when I am a man,
I may be like him. Mother, do I brag
To think I some time may be like my father?

If so, then is it he that teaches me;

For ever as I wonder at his skill,

He calls me boy, and says I must do more

When I become a man!

Emma. May you be such

A man as he!—If Heaven wills, better!—I'll

Not quarrel with its work; yet 'twill content me

If you are only such a man!

Alb. I'll show you

How I can shoot. [*Shoots.*] Look, mother! there's within
An inch!

Emma. O fy! it wants a hand.

[*Going into the cottage.*]

Alb. A hand's

An inch for me. I'll hit it yet. Now for it! [*Shoots again.*]

[*While ALBERT continues to shoot, the light gradually approaches the base of the mountains in the distance, and spreads itself over the lake and valley.*]

Enter TELL, watching ALBERT some time in silence.

Tell. That's scarce a miss that comes so near the mark!

Well aim'd, young archer! With what ease he draws

The bow! To see those sinews, who'd believe

Such vigour lodged in them? Well aim'd again!

There plays the skill will thin the chamois' herd,

And bring the lammer-geyer from the cloud

To earth. Perhaps do greater feats—Perhaps

Make man its quarry, when he dares to tread

Upon his fellow-man! That little arm,

His mother's palm can span, may help, anon,

To pull a sinewy tyrant from his seat,

And from their chains a prostrate people lift

To liberty! I'd be content to die,

Living to see that day!—What, Albert!

Alb. Ah!—

My father!

[*Running to TELL, who embraces him.*]

Emma. [*Running from the cottage.*] William!—Welcome,
welcome, William!

I did not look for you till noon, and thought

How long 'twould be ere noon would come! You're come—

How soon 'twill now be here and gone! O William!

When you are absent from me, I count time
By minutes; which, when you are here, flies by
In hours, that are not noted till they're out!

Now this is happiness! Joy's doubly joy
That comes before the time—It is a debt,
Paid ere 'tis due, which fills the owner's heart
With gratitude, and yet 'tis but his own!
And are you well? and has the chase proved good?
How has it fared with you? Come in; I'm sure
You want refreshment, William.

Tell. No; I shared
A herdsman's meal, upon whose lonely chalet
I chanced to light. I've had bad sport! My track
Lay with the wind, which to the startlish game
Betray'd me still. One only prize; and that
I gave mine humble host. You raise the bow
Too fast. [*To ALBERT, who has returned to his practice.*]
Bring't slowly to the eye— [*ALBERT shoots.*]

You've miss'd.
How often have you hit the mark to-day?

Alb. Not once yet.

Tell. You're not steady. I perceived
You waver'd now. Stand firm!—Let every limb
Be braced as marble, and as motionless.
Stand like the sculptor's statue on the gate
Of Altorf, that looks life, yet neither breathes
Nor stirs. [*ALBERT shoots.*] That's better!

Emma. William! William!—O!
To be the parents of a boy like that!—
Why speak you not—and wherefore do you sigh?
What's in your heart to keep the transport out
That fills up mine, when looking on our child,
Till it o'erflows mine eye? [*ALBERT shoots.*]

Tell. You've miss'd again!
Dost see the mark? Rivet your eye to it!
There let it stick, fast as the arrow would,
Could you but send it there!

Emma. Why, William, don't
You answer me? [*ALBERT shoots.*]

Tell. Again! How would you fare,
Suppose a wolf should cross your path, and you
Alone, with but your bow, and only time
To fix a single arrow? 'Twould not do
To miss the wolf! You said, the other day,
Were you a man, you'd not let Gesler live—
'Twas easy to say that. Suppose you, now,
Your life or his depended on that shot!—
Take care! That's Gesler! Now for liberty!
Right to the tyrant's heart! [*ALBERT shoots.*] Well done,
my boy!

Come here!—Now, Emma, I will answer you:

Do I not love you? Do I not love our child?
Is not that cottage dear to me, where I
Was born? How many acres would I give
That little vineyard for, which I have watch'd
And tended since I was a child? Those crags
And peaks—what spiréd city would I take
To live in, in exchange for them?—Yet what
Are these to me? What is this boy to me?
What art thou, Emma, to me—when a breath
Of Gesler's can take all!

Emma. O, William, think
How little is that all to him—too little
For Gesler, sure, to take. Bethink, thee, William,
We have no treasure.

Tell. Have we not? Have we
No treasure? How! No treasure? What!
Have we not liberty?—that precious ore,
That pearl, that gem, the tyrant covets most;
Yet can't enjoy himself—for which he drains
His coffers of their coin—his land of blood;
Goes without sleep—pines himself sallow-pale—
Yea, makes a pawn of his own soul—lacks ease—
Frets, till the bile gnaws appetite away—
Forgets both heaven and hell, only to strip
The wearer of it! Emma, we have that,
And that's enough for Gesler!

Emma. Then, indeed,
My William, we have much to fear!

Tell. We have;
And best it is we know how much. Then, Emma,
Make up thy mind, wife! Make it up! Remember
What wives and mothers on these very hills
Once breathed the air you breathe. Helvetia
Hath chronicles, the masters of the world,
As they were call'd—the Romans—kept for her;
And in those chronicles I've heard 'tis writ—
And praise set down by foes must needs be true—
'Tis writ, I say, that when the Rhetians—
'They were the early tenants of those hills—
Withstood the lust of Roman tyranny,
With Claudius Drusus, and a certain Nero,
Sons-in-law of Octavius Cæsar, at
Its head—the Rhetian women—when the men
By numbers overmatch'd at last gave way—
Seeing that liberty was gone, threw life
And nature, too, as worthless, after it;
Rush'd through the gaping ranks of them that fled,
And on the dripping weapons of the red
Resistless van impaled themselves and children!

Emma. O, William!

Tell. Emma, let the boy alone!
Don't clasp him so—"Twill soften him! Go, sir!

See if the valley sends us visitors
To-day. Some friend, perchance, may need thy guidance.
Away! [ALBERT goes out.] He's better from thee, Emma!
The time

Is come, a mother on her breast should fold
Her arms, as they had done with such endearments,
And bid her children go from her, to hunt
For danger—which will presently hunt them—
The less to heed it!

Emma. William, you are right.
The task you set me I will try to do.
I would not live myself to be a slave—
I would not live to be the dam of one!
No! woman as I am, I would not, William!
Then choose my course for me. Whate'er it is,
I will say, ay, and do it, too—Suppose
To dress my little stripling for the war,
And take him by the hand, and lead him to't!
Yes, I would do it at thy bidding, William,
Without a tear—I say that I would do it—
Though, now I only talk of doing it,
I can't help shedding one! [Weeps.

Tell. Did I not choose thee
From out the fairest of the maids of Uri,
Less than in beauty thou didst them surpass,
Than that thy soul that beauty overmatch'd?
Why rises on thy matron cheek that blush,
Mantling it fresh as in thy virgin morn,
But that I did so? Do I wonder, then,
To find thee equal to the task of virtue,
Although a hard one? No, I wonder not!
Why should I, Emma, make thy heart acquainted
With ills I could shut out from it—rude guests
For such a home! Here, only, we have had
Two hearts; in all things else—in love, in faith,
In hope, in joy—that never had but one!
But henceforth we must have but one, here, also.

Emma. O, William, you have wrong'd me—kindly wrong'd
me!

When ever yet was happiness the test
Of love in man or woman? Who'd not hold
To that which must advantage him? Who'd not
Keep promise to a feast, or mind his pledge
To share a rich man's purse? There's not a churl,
However base, but might be thus approved
Of most unswerving constancy. But that
Which loosens churls, ties friends! or changes them,
Only to stick the faster. William! William!
That man knew never yet the love of woman,
Who never had an ill to share with her!

Tell. Not even to know that would I in so
Ungentle partnership engage thee, Emma,

If will could help it; but necessity,
 The master yet of will, how strong soe'er,
 Compels me, prove thee. When I wedded thee,
 The land was free! O! with what pride I used
 To walk these hills, and look up to my God,
 And bless him that it was so! It was free!—
 From end to end, from cliff to lake 'twas free!—
 Free as our torrents are that leap our rocks,
 And plough our valleys, without asking leave;
 Or as our peaks that wear their caps of snow,
 In very presence of the regal sun!
 How happy was I in it then! I loved
 Its very storms! Yes, Emma, I have sat
 In my boat at night, when, midway o'er the lake,
 The stars went out, and down the mountain gorge
 The wind came roaring—I have sat and eyed
 The thunder breaking from his cloud, and smiled
 To see him shake his lightnings o'er my head,
 And think I had no master save his own!
 You know the jutting cliff round which a track
 Up hither winds, whose base is but the brow
 To such another one, with scanty room
 For two a-breast to pass? O'ertaken there
 By the mountain blast, I've laid me flat, along;
 And while gust follow'd gust, more furiously,
 As if to sweep me o'er the horrid brink,
 And I have thought of other lands, whose storms
 Are summer flaws to those of mine, and just
 Have wish'd me there—the thought that mine was free
 Has check'd that wish, and I have raised my head,
 And cried in thralldom to that furious wind,
 Blow on! This is the land of liberty!

Emma. I almost see thee on that fearful pass,
 And yet, so seeing thee, I have a feeling
 Forbids me wonder that thou didst so.

Tell. 'Tis

A feeling must not breathe where Gesler breathes,
 But may within these arms! List, Emma, list!
 A league is made to pull the tyrant down!
 E'en from his seat upon the rock of Altorf.
 Four hearts have staked their blood upon the cast,
 And mine is one of them.

Emma. I did not start!—

Tell me more, William!

Tell. I will tell thee all.—

Alb. [without]. O, father!

Old Melchtal [without]. Tell!—Tell!—William!

Emma. Don't you know
 That voice!

Enter OLD MELCHTAL, blind, led by ALBERT.

Old M. Where art thou, William?

Tell. Who is it?

Emma. Do you not know him?

Tell. No!—It cannot be

The voice of Melchtal!

Alb. Father, it is Melchtal!

Emma. What ails you, Tell?

Alb. O, father, speak to him!

Emma. What passion shakes you thus?

Tell. His eyes!—Where are they?

Melchtal has eyes.

Old M. Tell! Tell!

Tell. 'Tis Melchtal's voice.

Where are his eyes? Have they put out his eyes?

Has Gesler turn'd the little evening of

The old man's life to night, before its time?

To such black night as sees not with the day

All round it! Father, speak! Pronounce the name

Of Gesler!

Old M. Gesler.

Tell. Gesler has torn out

The old man's eyes! Support thy mother! Erni?

Where's Erni? Where's thy son? Is he alive?

And are his father's eyes torn out?

Old M. He lives, my William,
But knows it not.

Tell. When he shall know it! O! Heavens,

When he shall know it!—I am not thy son,

Yet—

Emma. [*Alarmed at his increasing vehemence.*] William!—
William!

Alb. Father!

Tell. Could I find

Something to tear—to rend, were worth it!—something

Most ravenous and bloody!—something like

Gesler!—a wolf;—No, no! A wolf's a lamb

To Gesler! It is a natural hunger makes

The wolf a savage; and, savage as he is,

Yet with his kind he gently doth consort.

'Tis but his lawful prey he tears; and that

He finishes—not mangles, and then leaves

To live! I'd let the wolf go free, for Gesler!—Water!

My tongue cleaves to my roof!

Old M. What ails thee, William?

I pray thee, William, let me hear thy voice!

That's not thy voice!

Tell. I cannot speak to thee!

Emma. [*Returning with a vessel of water.*] Here,
William!

Tell. Emma!

Emma. Drink!

Tell. I cannot drink!

Emma. Your eyes are fix'd.

Tell. Melchtal!—He has no eyes! [*Bursts into tears.*
The poor old man! [*Falls on MELCHTAL'S neck.*

Old M. I feel thee, Tell! I care not
That I have lost my eyes! I feel thy tears—
They're more to me than eyes! When I had eyes,
I never knew thee, William, as I know
Thee now, without. I do not want my eyes!

Tell. How came it, father? briefly, father!—quick
And briefly! Action! action! I'm in such glee
For work—so eager to be doing—have
Such stomach for a task, I've scarcely patience
To wait to know what 'tis—Here, here: sit down.
Now, father! [*OLD MELCHTAL sits down.—TELL kneels.*

Old M. Yesterday, when I and Erni
Went to the field, to bring our harvest home,
Two soldiers of the tyrant's came upon us,
And, without cause alleged, or interchange
Of word, proceeded to unyoke the oxen.

Tell. Go on!

Old M. As one stunn'd by a thunder-clap
Stands sudden still, nor for a while bethinks him
Of taking shelter from the storm; so we,
Confounded by an act so bold, a while
Look'd on in helpless silence; till at length
Erni, as sudden as the hurricane,
That lays the oak uprooted, ere you see
Its branches quiver, bounding on the spoilers,
Wrench'd from their grasp the yoke, and would have
smote

Them dead, had they not ta'en to instant flight!

Tell. Did he pursue them?

Old M. No; I threw myself
Between!

Tell. Why didst thou save them?

Old M. 'Twas my son
I saved! I clasp'd his knees—I calm'd his rage,
I forced him from me to the caverns of
Mount Faigel, William, till the tyrant's wrath
Might cool, or be diverted. 'Twas my son
I saved: for, scarcely was he out of sight,
And I within my cottage, when the cries
Of Gesler's bands beset it, calling for
The blood of Erni! William, he was safe!—
Clear of their fangs! My son was safe! O, think—
Think, William, what I felt to see his lair—
His very lair—beset, and know my boy—
My lion boy, was safe! Enough! They seized me,
And dragg'd me before Gesler.

Tell. Say no more!

His life cost you your eyes! 'Tis worth a pair
Of eyes, but not your eyes, old man! No, no;
He would have given it ten times over for

But one of them. But one? But for a hair
O' the lash! My bow and quiver! He was by?

Old M. Was by.

Tell. More arrows for my quiver.
And looking on?

Old M. And looking on.

Tell. [*Putting the arrows into his quiver.*] 'Twill do!
He would dine after that, and say a grace!
He would! To tear a man's eyes out, and then
Thank God!—My staff!—He'd have his wine, too. How
The man could look at it, and drink it off,
And not grow sick at the colour on't! Enough;
Put by the rest. [*To EMMA, who has brought him a bundle of
arrows.*] I'll grow more calm!

My flask—I want it fill'd; and put provision
Into my pouch—I thank thee for that look!
Now seem'st thou like some kind o'er-seeing angel,
Smiling as he prepares the storm, that, while it
Shakes the earth, and makes its tenants pale,
Doth smite a pestilence. Thou wouldst not stay me?

Emma. No!

Tell. Nor thy boy, if I required his service?

Emma. No, William!

Tell. Make him ready, Emma.

Old M. No!

Not Albert, William!

Emma. Yes; even Albert, father.

Thy cap and wallet; boy—thy mountain staff,—
Where hast thou laid it? Find it—haste! Don't keep
Thy father waiting. He is ready, William!

[*Leading ALBERT up to TELL.*

Tell. Well done—Well done! I thank you, love—I thank
you!

Now mark me, Albert! Dost thou fear the snow,
The ice-field, or the hail-flaw? Carest thou for
The mountain mist, that settles on the peak
When thou'rt upon it? Dost thou tremble at
The torrent roaring from the deep ravine,
Along whose shaking ledge thy track doth lie?
Or faint'st thou at the thunder-clap, when on
The hill thou art o'ertaken by the cloud,
And it doth burst around thee? Thou must travel
All night!

Alb. I'm ready. Say all night again.

Tell. The mountains are to cross; for thou must reach
Mount Faigel by the dawn!

Alb. Not sooner shall
The dawn be there than I.

Tell. Heaven speeding thee!

Alb. Heaven speeding me!

Tell. Show me thy staff.—Art sure
O' the point? I think 'tis loose. No—Stay—'Twill do!

Caution is speed when danger's to be pass'd.
Examine well the crevice—Do not trust
The snow! 'Tis well there is a moon to-night.
You're sure o' the track?

Alb. Quite sure.

Tell. The buskin of
That leg's untied. Stoop down and fasten it.
You know the point where you must round the cliff?

Alb. I do.

Tell. Thy belt is slack—Draw't tight.
Erni is in Mount Faigel. Take this dagger,
And give it him. You know its caverns well.
In one of them you'll find him. Bid thy mother
Farewell. Come, boy! We go a mile together.
Father, thy hand. [*Shakes hands with* OLD MELCHTAL.]

Old M. How firm thy grasp is, William!

Tell. There is a resolution in it, father,
Will keep.

Old M. I cannot see thine eye, but I know
How it looks!

Tell. I'll tell thee how it looks. List, father,
List. Father, thou shalt be revenged! My Emma,
Melchtal's thy father. That's his home till I
Return. Yes, father, thou shalt be revenged!
Lead him in, Emma, lead him in. The sun
Grows hot—The old man's weak and faint! Mind, father,
Mind, thou shalt be revenged! In, wife—In—In.
Thou shalt be sure revenged! Come, Albert!

[*EMMA and MELCHTAL enter the cottage.—TELL and
ALBERT go out hastily.*]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Mountain with Mist.*

GESLER is seen descending the Mountain with a hunting-poie.

Ges. Alone, alone! and every step the mist
Thickens around me! On these mountain tracks
To lose one's way, they say, is sometimes death.
What ho! hollo!—No tongue replies to me!
I o thunder hath the horror of this silence!

dare not stop!—The day, though not half run,
Is not less sure to end night; and night,
Dreary when through the social haunts of men
Her solemn darkness walks, in such a place

As this, comes wrapp'd in most appalling fear!
 I dare not stop; nor dare I, yet, proceed;
 Begirt with hidden danger! If I take
 This hand, it carries me still deeper into
 The wild and savage solitudes I'd shun,
 Where once to faint with hunger is to die!
 If this, it leads me to the precipice,
 Whose brink with fatal horror rivets him
 That treads upon't; till, drunk with fear, he reels
 Into the gaping void, and headlong down
 Plunges to still more hideous death! Curséd slaves!
 To let me wander from them! [*Thunder.*] Ho!—Holloa!
 My voice sounds weaker to mine ear! I've not
 The strength to call I had; and through my limbs
 Cold tremor runs, and sickening faintness seizes
 On my heart! O heaven, have mercy! Do not see
 The colour of the hands I lift to thee!
 Look only on the strait wherein I stand,
 And pity it! Let me not sink! Uphold,—
 Support me! Mercy! mercy! I shall die!

[He leans against a rock, stupified with terror and exhaustion—it grows darker and darker—the rain pours down in torrents, and a furious wind arises—the mountain streams begin to swell and roar. ALBERT is seen descending by the side of one of the streams, which in his course he crosses with the help of his pole.]

Alb. I'll breathe upon this level, if the wind
 Will let me. Ha! a rock to shelter me!
 Thanks to't. A man, and fainting! Courage, friend,
 Courage! A stranger that has lost his way—
 Take heart!—Take heart; you're safe. How feel you now?
[Gives him drink from a flask.]

Ges. Better.

Alb. You have lost your way upon the hill?

Ges. I have.

Alb. And whither would you go?

Ges. To Altorf.

Alb. I'll guide you thither.

Ges. You're a child.

Alb. I know

The way. The track I've come is harder far
 To find.

Ges. The track you've come! What mean you? Sure
 You have not been still farther in the mountains?

Alb. I've travelled from Mount Faigel.

Ges. No one with thee?

Alb. No one but God.

Ges. Do you not fear these storms?

Alb. God's in the storm!

Ges. And there are torrents, too,
 That must be cross'd.

Alb. God's by the torrent, too!

Ges. You're but a child.

Alb. God will be with a child!

Ges. You're sure you know the way?

Alb. 'Tis but to keep
The side of yonder stream.

Ges. But guide me safe,

I'll give thee gold!

Alb. I'll guide thee safe without.

Ges. Here's earnest for thee. [*Offers gold.*] Here—I'll
double that,

Yea, treble it, let me but see the gate

Of Altorf. Why do you refuse the gold?

Take't.

Alb. No.

Ges. You shall.

Alb. I will not.

Ges. Why?

Alb. Because

I do not covet it; and, though I did,

It would be wrong to take it as the price

Of doing one a kindness.

Ges. Ha!—who taught
Thee that?

Alb. My father.

Ges. Does he live in Altorf?

Alb. No, in the mountains.

Ges. How!—a mountaineer?

He should become a tenant of the city;

He'd gain by't.

Alb. Not so much as he might lose by't.

Ges. What might he lose by't?

Alb. Liberty.

Ges. Indeed!

He also taught thee that?

Alb. He did.

Ges. His name?

Alb. This is the way to Altorf, sir.

Ges. I'd know

Thy father's name.

Alb. The day is wasting—We
Have far to go.

Ges. Thy father's name, I say?

Alb. I will not tell it thee.

Ges. Not tell it me!

Why?

Alb. You may be an enemy of his.

Ges. May be, a friend.

Alb. May be; but should you be
An enemy—Although I would not tell you

My father's name, I'd guide you safe to Altorf.

Will you follow me?

Ges. Ne'er mind thy father's name:
What would it profit me to know't? Thy hand;
We are not enemies.

Alb. I never had
An enemy!

Ges. Lead on.

Alb. Advance your staff
As you descend; and fix it well. Come on!

Ges. What! must we take that steep?

Alb. 'Tis nothing! Come!
I'll go before—Ne'er fear. Come on—Come on!
[*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*An Apartment in the Castle of Altorf.*

Enter MICHAEL and JAGHELI.

Jag. Yes, Michael, so it stands. She only is
Step-daughter to the Seneschal. The less
Her debt of duty; which, though it were more,
She were absolved from by the tyrant's part
He acts, who weds her where she loathes, not loves.
O, win her for me, Michael, or you'll have
To get a leech for me.

Mic. Get thee a leech? I'll be in want of one
Myself! Thy sickness is infectious. Would
A scalded foot had kept me to the house—
A fever tied me to my bed—a fit
Tripp'd up my heels in the street, ere I had met thee,
To play the leech for thee! I was as sound
As reckless laughter, then; could eat or drink
With him that ask'd me—could go here or there
And find me ample fund of mirth, where'er
I went—could sing—could dance—could keep awake
Or sleep as well as any one! You've sped me!
Concluded me!—brought all my fair estate
Of rich content to melancholy end!
Jagheli, I'm in love.

Jag. In love!

Mic. In love?

Jag. Michael in love!—What, prithee, made thee fall
In love?

Mic. A cup of wine.

Jag. Another cup
Will work thy cure.

Mic. If thou couldst give me with't
The hand that help'd me to't, and with the hand
The lip that kiss'd the cup ere it touch'd mine.—
Nor was it yet the hand, nor yet the lip,
But the arch smile that quiver'd on the lip
And seem'd to mock the motion of the hand,

Moving in maiden coyness. Plague on't! I've
 Been posed at mine own trade!—proved an apprentice
 With mine own tools!—Master'd wherein I bragg'd,
 To show my skill—and only by a smile
 Half shown—you scarce could tell if it was there
 Or not—a glimpse and gone, and then again
 A glimpse and gone again, ere you could say
 You saw it!—I'm in love.—I have it here!—
 Here in the very centre of my heart!
 That ever I should live to see the day,
 I fell in love;

Jag. Psha! Michael! You in love!
 You have been laughing till you've got a stitch
 In the side.

Mic. A stitch! If thou hast such another,
 It will not let thee sleep. But hither comes
 Thy lady's chamberlain, with dulcet voice,
 To call thee to her. Now her father's out,
 Make profit of thy calling, master leech,
 Or follow it no more!

Enter BRAUN.

Braun. My lady says
 She'll see you, sir.—Come this way.

Mic. Mind!

Jag. I will.

[*BRAUN and JAGHELI go out.*]

Mic. I'd like to try a race with him in love.
 Can he compare with me in such a strife?—
 With me, could talk him dumb at any time?
 Ere he began to woo, I should be done—
 But, to be done, a man must needs begin.

Enter AGNES, unobserved by MICHAEL.

Agn. What!—Mischief plotting?—'Tis a graceful cheat!
 Rogue as he is, the man's a man to love.

Mic. Hang modesty!

Agn. Well said! When that doth die,
 No cousin goes of thine, to put thee to
 The charge of mourning.

Mic. I'll take heart, and woo
 Her soundly!

Agn. Love have pity on her, then!

Mic. This very hour I'll tell her I'm in love.

Agn. This very hour she'll tell thee thou'rt a fool.

Mic. I'll marry her in a week.

Agn. You'll wait, perhaps,
 A little longer.

Mic. Nay, a week's too long!
 Three days from this.

Agn. Why not to-morrow, sir?
 You'd be as near your wedding.

Mic. Send her now,

Kind Cupid—Send her now. I'm in the mood
To woo her.

Agn. What, if she's not in the mood
To come?

Mic. In such a mood, that were she marble,
I'd soften her—or ice, I'd make her melt.

Agn. O dear!

Mic. Or steel itself, she should become
As gently ductile as the generous ore
Comes nearest to her worth, and, yet, not more
Than sums it half, although 'twere virgin gold!

Agn. I'll fly!—

Mic. Now, Cupid, now, I'll conquer her
In all her charms that vanquish'd at a sight!
By every arrow in thy quiver, boy,
If thou hast made me smart—she shan't go free;
So send her to me.

Agn. Nay, in sooth I'll stay.
Who ever fear'd a boaster?

Mic. Cupid, now!
Boy, I would stake my heart against thy wings,
I'd woo, and win, and wed her in a day!

Agn. [*Coming forward.*] O, sir, you are the youth that
brought the leech.

Mic. [*Confused.*] Ma'am?

Agn. And a pretty leech it is you've brought.

Mic. Ma'am?

Agn. He must needs have practised very long,
I'o be so sapient and profound a leech!
Where studied he, I pray you?

Mic. [*Stammers.*] Studied, ma'am?

Agn. Yes, studied! [*Imitating him.*] Thinkest thou a leech
is made

By only putting on the coat of one?
At such a rate, you would, yourself, be one,
Instead of his good trusty serving-man.

Mic. His serving-man!

Agn. Yes, sir, that pounds his drugs—
The half of which I wot are poisonous—
Makes ready his emplastrums—filthy things!
Boils his decoctions, and makes up his powders,
Ointments, and mixtures: I am sure I've seen you
In your working clothes, without that Sunday chin
You now have on, beating a tune upon
The leech's mortar—to the which you sang
In such melodious strain, that, one and all,
The passers-by did stop their ears, o'ercome
With surfeit of the sweetness!

Mic. Madam,—Why,
Michael! Dear Michael! What are you about?
Are you a man?

Agn. What wages do you get,

Besides the blows the leech bestows on you,
When you forget to make his nostrums up,
Or mar them in the mixing?

Mic. Blows!

Agn. Ay, blows.

Come, come; don't look so fierce! You're just the man
To take them kindly, as, indeed, you should.
For I can read, sir, by your face, you're dull
Of wit, and slow of comprehension; nor
Of memory careful in the hoarding of
What's trusted to it. If the worthy leech
But beats thee once a week, he's not more wise
Than patient.

Mic. [*Aside.*] Michael, thou hast found thy match!
But wilt thou yield without a struggle for't?

No!—Courage, Michael! Now or never, man! [*Struts up to*
AGNES.] Ma'am!

Agn. Bless me, sir, perhaps I may be wrong!
And you are not his serving-man?

Mic. No, ma'am.

Agn. Nor anything under the leech?

Mic. No, ma'am.

Agn. Then, I will e'en make bold to tell you, sir,
I think the leech is just as much a leech
As you are.

Mic. Ma'am!

Agn. I've found him out, sir.

Mic. Have you?

Agn. And found out you—You shall be flay'd alive, sir,
For passing him for a leech. A pretty way
To make my cousin well!

Mic. Your cousin, ma'am?

I took you for the lady's abigail!
Come, come, you are—or nature in her work
Shows little thrift, so fitting things for ends
They come not to—You are her abigail!

Agn. I vow I'm not!

Mic. Your voice with which you vow
Protests you are.

Agn. My voice!

Mic. 'Tis of the pitch

That chills the lover's hope—that answers "no"
To all his sighs; the which, when daughters hear,
They straight bethink them of a breaking heart!
My uncle had an abigail with just
Your voice.

Agn. Indeed?

Mic. Indeed! She was a match
For twenty lovers that my cousin had.
Not one of them could move her! Then your eye—

Agn. Ay, what of that?

Mic. Why such an eye should go

With such a voice! There's watchfulness in it.
'Twas made to pierce disguises, and to look
On pleading lovers, as on stocks and stones!

Agn. Your uncle's abigail, I guess, had such
An eye, too?

Mic. Yes—a little softer, though,
In its fire.—And then your dress!—

Agn. What of my dress?

[*Angrily.*

Mic. Why, 'tis put on in perfect shrew-fashion,
Like armour, straight, and square, and stiff! It speaks
Defiance to male-kind! Were Twenty-one
To put it on, 'twould look Two-score! Wast thou
A beauty now, and teased with lovers, such
A dress as that would free thee from them all.

Agn. Art thou in earnest now?

Mic. In earnest! Yes.

I'll take an oath thou art her abigail—

As much as I'm the leech's serving-man,—

As much as he's the leech. Sweet, we are both

True serving-men to love; and you're the hire;

I serve for.

[*Catching her in his arms.*

Agn. [*Disengaging herself.*] Stay!—Who serves for hire
must wait

Till it be given him, ere he takes his hire;

He must not help himself.

Mic. But give me mine—

Agn. Hush!—Some one comes.

Mic. I'm mute as faith

That's sworn to silence. Let me keep thy hand.

[*They retire near, and remain unseen by BRAUN.*

Enter BRAUN.

Braun. Now, Braun, whoever after calls thee "drone"

Doth lie, and men shall tell him so. Thou'rt wise,

Watchful, and keen of sight; canst see when all

The house besides, with open eyes, are blind—

Stone blind. Thou shalt no more be Braun, the dolt,

The sluggish Braun, the hound, the hog, or Braun

The good-for-naught; or everything, but Braun

Himself! Thou shalt be honest Braun—good Braun!—

Braun that can see a thing!—can find it out

Before the Seneschal!—brave Braun!—The leech

Is but a cheat—my lady but a cheat,—

Her sickness all put on. He is to come

On Wednesday—no, to-day is Wednesday—no,

Wednesday was yesterday. He is to come—

I have forgot the day; no matter. I

Remember he's to come, and that's enough.

He is to come at—Plague upon the hour!

'Twas not at breakfast-hour, or dinner-hour,

Or any hour of meals or sleep—I'm sure

Of that; but then, what signifies the hour,

When I've forgot the day? Most true—most true;
 A lucky thought. No matter what the hour,
 Or what the day; 'tis what he purposed at
 The hour and the day, concerns me to remember,
 And that I don't forget. He is to come
 To take away my lady mistress, who
 Is nothing loth. Remember that, good Braun,
 And make thy fortune with the Seneschal. [Goes out.]

AGNES and MICHAEL advance.

Agn. Undone—undone! If thou remain'st, 'tis death!
Mic. And if I fly, what fly I to but death?
Agn. Nay, save thy life.
Mic. Thou art its precious breath,
 And, parted from thee, 'tis no longer life.
Agn. Could I believe thee!
Mic. If thou wouldst, thou couldst.
 There lack of power is only lack of will.
Agn. Nay, say not so; in sooth, I've all the will.
Mic. Then, here, I plight my faith to thee!
Agn. Nay, hold!
Mic. 'Tis done, sweet maid, and cannot be recall'd!
 So give me vow for vow. No sentinel
 Keeps watch beneath the casement where you sleep:
 There could I hang, by aid of this kind night,
 A ladder—such a one as lovers find
 Their way by to their mistress' arms, when doors
 Are barr'd against them—Thou'rt not happy here!
 This house of wolves is no abode for thee!
 Let's to our friends, and briefly, ere we part,
 Resolve the means and time for meeting; ne'er
 To part again!
Agn. You'll take the abigail?
Mic. If you will take the leech's serving-man. [They go out.]

SCENE III.—*The Gate of Altorf.*

Enter GESLER and ALBERT.

Alb. You're at the gate of Altorf. [Returning]
Ges. Tarry, boy!
Alb. I would be gone—I am waited for. [Going.]
Ges. Come back!
 Who waits for thee? Come, tell me; I am rich
 And powerful, and can reward.
Alb. 'Tis close
 On evening!—I have far to go!—I'm late!
Ges. Stay! I can punish, too.
Alb. I might have left you,

When on the hill I found you fainting, with
The mist around you; but I stopp'd and cheer'd you,
Till to yourself you came again. I offer'd
To guide you, when you could not find the way,
And I have brought you to the gate of Altorf!

Ges. Boy, do you know me?

Alb. No.

Ges. Why fear you, then,
To trust me with your father's name?—Speak.

Alb. Why

Do you desire to know it?

Ges. You have served me,
And I would thank him, if I chanced to pass
His dwelling.

Alb. 'Twould not please him, that a service,
So trifling, should be made so much of!

Ges. Trifling?

You've saved my life.

Alb. Then do not question me,
But let me go!

Ges. When I have learn'd from thee
Thy father's name. What ho!

[*Knocks at the gate.*]

Sentinel. [*Within.*] Who's there?

Ges. Gesler!

[*The gate is opened.*]

Alb. Ha, Gesler!

Ges. [*To the Soldiers.*—Seize him! Wilt thou tell me
Thy father's name?

Alb. No!

Ges. I can bid them cast thee
Into a dungeon! Wilt thou tell it now?

Alb. No!

Ges. I can bid them strangle thee! Wilt tell it?

Alb. Never!

Ges. Away with him! Send Sarnem to me.

[*Soldiers take off ALBERT through the gate.*]

Behind that boy, I see the shadow of
A hand, must wear my fetters, or 'twill try
To strip me of my power. I have felt to-day
What 'tis to live at others' merey. I
Have tasted fear, to very sickness, and
Owed to a peasant-boy my safety—Ay,
My life! and there does live the slave can say
Gesler's his debtor! How I loathed the free
And fearless air with which he trod the hill!
Yea, though the safety of his steps was mine,
Oft as our path-way brink'd the precipice,
I wish'd to see him miss his footing and
Roll over!—But he's in my power!—Some way
To find the parent nest of this fine eaglet,
And harrow it! I'd like to clip the broad
And full-grown wing that taught his tender pinion
So bold a flight!

Enter SARNEM.

Ges. Ha, Sarnem! Have the slayes,
Attended me, returned?

Sar. They have.

Ges. You'll see
'That every one of them be laid in fetters.

Sar. I will.

Ges. Didst mark the boy?

Sar. That pass'd me?

Ges. Yes.

Sar. A mountaineer.

Ges. You'd say so, saw you him
Upon the hills; he walks them like their lord!
I tell thee, Sarnem, looking on that boy,
I felt I was not master of those hills.
He has a father!—Neither promises
Nor threats could draw from him his name—a father
Who talks to him of liberty! I fear
That man!

Sar. He may be found.

Ges. He must; and, soon
As found, disposed of! I can see him now.
He is as palpable to my sight, as if
He stood like you before me. I can see him
Scaling that rock! Yea, I can feel him, Sarnem,
As I were in his grasp, and he about
To hurl me o'er yon parapet! I live
In danger, till I find that man! Send parties
Into the mountains, to explore them far
And wide; and if they chance to light upon
A father, who expects his child, command them
To drag him straight before us. Sarnem, Sarnem,
They are not yet subdued. Some way to prove
Their spirit!—Take this cap; and have it set
Upon a pole in the market-place, and see
That one and all do bow to it. Whoe'er
Resists or pays the homage sullenly,
Our bonds await him! Sarnem, see it done!

[SARNEM goes out.]

We need not fear the spirit that would rebel
But dares not:—That which dares we will not fear!

[Goes out.]

SCENE IV.—*The Market-Place.*

*Burghers and Peasants, with PIERRE, THEODORE, and
Savoyards, discovered.*

CHORUS.

Pie. Come, come, another strain.

The. A cheerful one.

Sav. What shall it be ?

The. No matter, so 'tis gay.

Begin !

Sav. You'll join the burden ?

The. Never fear.

Go on.

[*Savoyard plays and sings, during which TELL and VERNER enter, the former leans upon his bow, and listens gloomily.*

The Savoyard from clime to clime
Tunes his strain, and sings his rhyme ;
And still, whatever clime he sees,
His eye is bright, his heart's at ease.
For gentle, simple—all reward
The labours of the Savoyard.

The rich forget their pride—the great
Forget the splendour of their state,
Whene'er the Savoyard they meet,
And list his song, and say 'tis sweet ;
For titled, wealthy—none regard
The fortune of the Savoyard.

But never looks his eye so bright,
And never feels his heart so light,
As when in beauty's smile he sees
His strain is sweet, his rhyme doth please.
Oh that's the praise doth best reward
The labours of the Savoyard !

But, though the rich retain'd their pride,
And though the great their praise denied,—
Though beauty pleased his song to slight,
His heart would smile, his eye be bright :
His strain itself would still reward
The labours of the Savoyard.

[*They shout, and laughingly accompany the Savoyards, who go out, with some of the crowd.*

Tell. What's the heart worth that lends itself to glee,
With argument like theirs for bitterness ?
Or is't the melancholy sport of grief
To look on pleasures and to handle them,
That, when it lays the precious jewels down,
It may perceive its poverty the more ?
Methinks those cheeks are not exactly dress'd
To please the hearts that own them.

Ver. Doubt it not.

They feel their thralldom !

Tell. So they should !—That's hope—
I'd have it gall them—eat into their flesh !
Long as they fester, there's a remedy ;
But for your callous slave I know no cure !

To-morrow brings the test, will surely prove them.
You'll not forget the hour?

Ver. Be sure I will not.

Tell. Erni is warn'd ere this; and Furst, I've said,
Is ready. Fare you well.

Ver. Stay, William!—Now
Observe the people.

[The people have gathered to one side, and look in the opposite direction with apprehension and trouble—those who had gone off return.]

Tell. Ha!—They please me now—

That's honest!—That's sincere! I still prefer'd
The seasons like themselves.—Let summer laugh,
But give me winter with a hearty scowl.
None of your hollow sunshine—Fogs and clouds
Become it best!—I like them now!—Their looks
Are just in season. There has surely been
Some shifting of the wind, upon such brightness
To bring so sudden lowering.

Ver. We shall see.

Pie. 'Tis Sarnem!

The. *[Looking out.]* What is that he brings with him?

Pie. A pole; and on the top of it a cap.
That looks like Gesler's——I could pick it from
A hundred!

The. So could I!—My heart hath oft
Leap'd at the sight of it. What comes he now
To do?

Enter SARNEM, with Soldiers, bearing GESLER's cap upon a pole, which he fixes into the ground; the people looking on in silence and amazement.

Sar. Ye men of Altorf!

Behold the emblem of your master's power
And dignity. This is the cap of Gesler,
Your Governor! Let all bow down to it
Who owe him love and loyalty. To such
As shall refuse this lawful homage, or
Accord it sullenly, he shows no grace,
But dooms them to the penalty of bondage
Till they're instructed 'tis no less their gain
Than duty, to obey their master's mandate.
Conduct the people hither, one by one,
To bow to Gesler's cap.

Tell. Have I my hearing?

[Peasants pass, taking off their hats and bowing to GESLER's cap.]

Ver. Away! Away!

Tell. Or sight?—They do it, Verner!
They do it!—Look!—Ne'er call me man again!
I'll herd with baser animals! They keep
Their stations. Still the dog's a dog—The reptile

Doth know his proper rank, and sinks not to
The uses of the grade below him.—Man!
Man! that exalts his head above them all,
Doth ape them all! He's man, and he's the reptile!
Look!—Look! Have I the outline of that caitiff,
Who to the tyrant's feather bends his crown,
The while he loathes the tyrant?

Ver. Come away,
Before they mark us.

Tell. No! no!—Since I've tasted,
I'll e'en taste on! I 'gin, methinks, to like it.

[PIERRE passes the cap, smiles, and bows slightly.]

Sar. What smiled you at?

Pie. I bow'd as low as he did!

Sar. Nay, but you smiled. How dared you smile?

Tell. Good!—good!

Sar. [Striking him.] Take that. Remember when you
smile again,

To do't in season.

Ver. Come away.

Tell. Not yet,—

Why would you have me quit the feast, methinks,
Grows richer and richer?

Ver. You change colour.

Tell. Do I?

And so do you.

Sar. [Striking another.] Bow lower, slave!

Tell. Do you feel

That blow?—My flesh is tingling with't. Well done!

How pleasantly the rascal lays it on!

Well done! Well done! I would it had been I!

Ver. You tremble, William. Come, you must not stay.

Tell. Why not?—What harm is there? I tell thee, Verner,
I know no difference 'twixt enduring wrong
And living in the fear on't. Man! wear
The tyrant's fetters, when it only wants
His nod to put them on; and bear his stripes
When, that I suffer them, he needs but hold
His finger up! Verner, you're not the man
To be content because a villain's mood
Forbears? You're right—you're right! Have with you,
Verner.

Enter MICHAEL.

Sar. Bow, slave.

Mic. For what?

[TELL stops and turns.

Sar. Obey, and question then.

[Laughs.

Mic. I'll question, now, perhaps not then obey.

Tell. A man!—A man!

Sar. 'Tis Gesler's will that all

Bow to that cap.

Mic. Were it thy lady's cap,
I'd courtesy to it.

Sar. Do you mock us, friend ?

Mic. Not I. I'll bow to Gesler, if you please ;
But not his cap, nor cap of any he
In Christendom !

Tell. A man ;—I say, a man !

Sar. I see you love a jest ; but jest not now,
Else you may make us mirth, and pay for't too.
Bow to the cap !

Tell. The slave would humour him.
Holds he but out !

Sar. Do you hear ?

Mic. I do.

Tell. Well done !

The lion thinks as much of cowering
As he does !

Sar. Once for all, bow to that cap.

Tell. Verner, let go my arm.

Sar. Do you hear me, slave ?

Mic. Slave !

Tell. Let me go !

Ver. He is not worth it, Tell ;
A wild and idle gallant of the town.

Tell. A man !—I'll swear, a man ! Don't hold me, Verner.
Verner, let go my arm !—Do you hear me, man ?
You must not hold me, Verner.

Sar. Villain, bow
To Gesler's cap.

Mic. No—not to Gesler's self !

Sar. Seize him !

Tell. [*Rushing forward.*] Off, off, you base and hireling pack !
Lay not your brutal touch upon the thing
God made in his own image ! Crouch yourselves !
'Tis your vocation, which you should not call
On free-born men to share with you, who stand
Erect, except in presence of their God
Alone !

Sar. What ! shrink you, cowards ? Must I do
Your duty for you ?

Tell. Let them but stir !—I've scatter'd
A flock of hungry wolves, outnumbering them,—
For sport I did it. Sport !—I scatter'd them
With but a staff, not half so thick as this.

[*Wrests SARNEM'S weapon from him—SARNEM and
Soldiers fly.*]

What !—Ha !—Beset by hares ! Ye men of Altorf,
What fear ye ? See what things you fear—the shows
And surfaces of men ! Why stand you wondering there ?
Why look you on a man that's like yourselves,
And see him do the deeds yourselves might do,
And act them not ? Or know you not yourselves ?
That ye are men ?—that ye have hearts and thoughts
To feel and think the deeds of men, and hands

To do them? Fear you God, and fear you him
 Who fears *not* God, but, in his sight, defies him!
 You hunt the chamois, and you've seen him take
 The precipice before he'd yield the freedom
 His Maker gave him; and you are content
 To live in bonds, that have a thought of freedom,
 Which Heaven ne'er gave the little chamois.
 Why gaze you still with blanchéd cheeks upon me?
 Lack you the manhood even to look on,
 And see bold deeds achieved by others' hands?
 Or is't that cap still holds you thralls to fear?
 Be free, then! There! Thus do I trample on
 The cap of Gesler, as I would on him! [*Throws down the pole.*]

Sar. [*Suddenly entering with Soldiers.*] Seize him!

[*All the people, except VERNER and MICHAEL, fly.*]

Tell. Surrounded!

Mic. Stand!—I'll back thee!

Ver. Madman! [*Forces MICHAEL off.*]

[*TELL, after a struggle, is secured and thrown to the ground, where they proceed to chain him, and, then, raise him. They raise him, heavily chained, bursting with indignation, and breathless.*]

Tell. Slaves!

Sar. Rail on; thy tongue has yet its freedom.

Tell. Slaves!

Sar. On to the castle with him—forward!

Tell. Slaves! [*They go out.*]

Re-enter MICHAEL, still held by VERNER.

Mic. There!—There!—They bear him off! Who is he?

Ver. Tell!

Mic. What!—Tell! Why held you me? What was my life,

To save that noble lion from the toils?

Ver. Michael, I knew thee not till now. I see

Thou art a man to trust. If thou wouldst free

That lion from the toils, there is a way.

Mic. Show't me.

Ver. Before this time to-morrow, Michael,
 The cantons will be up in arms, and here
 In Altorf.

Mic. Ha!—The tyrant's castle?—

Ver. Yes.

Mic. Verner, thou hast saved a precious life to-day

In saving mine. Let's see: how many friends

Can I provide me with 'twixt this and night?

Ver. For what?

Mic. This night I mean to win a bride,
 And marry her to-morrow.

Ver. Art thou mad?

Mic. I am—why not? Who'd not be mad upon
 The golden eve of his bright wedding-day?

Don't wonder at me, Verner. Do you see
Yon turret?

Ver. Yes.

Mic. Spy you a casement, too,
Just half-way up?

Ver. I do.

Mic. This night to me
That casement opens; and a cord, let down,
Takes up a hempen ladder, strong enough
For me to mount.

Ver. What then?

Mic. When I have won
The prize I venture for, and safe bestow'd,
What hinders ten or twenty of my friends—
What hinders them, I say, to lodge with me
This night in yonder turret? Come along;
I've scanty time to bid so many guests.
Come on; and, as we go, possess me of
Your plans, the minute you're to act upon them,
With all the rest! Don't wonder at me, man:
You'll bless the day that Michael took a wife. *[They go out.]*

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Chamber in the Castle.*

Enter GESLER, with RODOLPH, LUTOLD, GERARD, and Officers.

Ges. *[To RODOLPH.]* Double the guards. Stay! place your
trustiest men

At the postern. Stop! You'd go with half your errand:
I'll tell you when to go! Let every soul
Within the walls be under arms! The sick
That do not keep their beds, or can rise from them,
Must take a weapon! Can they only raise
A hand, we've use for them. Away now. Tumult

[RODOLPH goes out.]

Under our very brows! The slaves will come,
In torrents from the hills, and, like a flood,
O'erwhelm us! Lutold, 'tis our final order,
On pain of death, no quarter shall be given!
Another word!—Let them be men, this once,
I promise them the sacking of the town!
Without reserve, I give it them—of property
Or soul! I've nothing further, sir. *[LUTOLD goes out.]* I'll

raze

Their habitations, hunt them from their hills,

Exterminate them, ere I'll live in fear!

What word now? *[To RODOLPH, who re-enters.]*

Rod. 'Twas a false alarm. The people
Paid prompt submission to your order: one
Alone resisted, whom they have secured,
And bring in chains before you.

Ges. So—I breathe
Again! 'Twas false, then, that our soldiers fled?

Rod. 'Twas but a party of them fled, my lord;
Which, reinforced, return'd, and soon o'erpower'd
The rash offender.

Ges. What! fled they from one?
A single man? How many were there?

Rod. Four,
With Sarnem.

Ges. Sarnem! Did he fly?

Rod. He did;
But 'twas for succour.

Ges. Succour! One to four,
And four need succour? I begin to think
We're sentinell'd by effigies of men,
Not men themselves. And Sarnem, too! What kind
Of man is he that made a tiger cower?
Yea, and with backers! I should like to see
That man.

Rod. He's here.

Ges. I'm on the hills again!
I see their bleak tops looking down upon me,
And think I hear them ask me with a scowl
If I would be their master. Do not sheathe
Your swords!—Stand near me!—Beckon some of those
About me. I would be attended. If
He stirs, despatch him.

Rod. He's in chains, my lord.

Ges. I see—I see he is.

Enter SARNEM and Soldiers, with TELL in chains.

Sar. Down, slave!
Behold the Governor. Down!—Down! and beg
For mercy!

Ges. *[Seated.]* Does he hear?

Sar. Debate it not.

Be prompt. Submission, slave! Thy knee—thy knee!
Or with thy life thou playest.

Rod. Let's force him to
The ground.

Ges. Can I believe my eyes? He smiles!

Ger. Why don't you smite him for that look?

Ges. He grasps

His chains as he would make a weapon of them
To lay the smiter dead. What kind of man

Is this, that looks, in thralldom, more at large,
Than they who lay it on him?

Rod. Lo you how

The caitiff scowls! Pull out his eyes!

Int. Lop off

A limb for him!

Ges. A heart accessible as his to trembling
The rock or marble hath. They fear far more
To inflict than he to suffer. Each one calls
Upon the other to accomplish that
Himself hath not the manhood to attempt!
Why don't they take him from my sight? Behold!
He has brought them to a pause; and there they stand
Like things entranced by some magician's spell,
Wondering that they are masters of their organs,
And not their faculties. They gaze on me
As one expected to perform a part
Which he forgets to fill. [*Rises.*] They must not see me
So lost. Come, draw thy breath with ease—thou'rt Gesler—
Their lord; and he's a slave thou look'st upon!
Canst thou not mulct the villain in his life?
Hast thou not tortures to requite him with?
'Tis only in the absence of thy wrath
He braves it. Let it show itself—at once
He's passive as the dust thou tread'st upon!
Why speak'st thou not?

Tell. For wonder.

Ges. Wonder!

Tell. Yes,

That thou shouldst seem a man!

Ges. What should I seem?

Tell. A monster!

Ges. Ha! Beware—Think on thy chains.

Tell. Though they were doubled—Though they weigh'd me
down

Prostrate to the earth, methinks I could rise up
Erect with nothing but the honest pride
Of telling thee, usurper, to the teeth,
Thou art a monster! Think upon my chains!
Show me the link of them, which, could it speak,
Would give its evidence against my word.
Think on my chains! They are my vouchers, which
I show to Heaven, as my acquittance from
The impious swerving of abetting thee
In mockery of its lord!—Think on my chains!
How came they on me?

Ges. Darest thou question me?

Tell. Darest thou not answer?

Ges. Do I hear?

Tell. Thou dost!

Ges. Beware my vengeance!

Tell. Can it more than kill?

Ges. Enough, it can do that.

Tell. No; not enough!

It cannot take away the grace of life—
 Its comeliness of port that virtue gives—
 Its head erect with consciousness of truth—
 Its rich attire of honourable deeds—
 Its fair report that's rife on good men's tongues!
 It cannot lay its hands on these, no more
 Than it can pluck his brightness from the sun,
 Or with polluted finger tarnish it.

Ges. But it can make thee writhe?

Tell. It may!

Ges. And groan?

Tell. It may; and I may cry.

Go on, though it should make me groan again!

Ges. Whence comest thou?

Tell. From the mountains. Wouldst thou learn
 What news from thence?

Ges. Canst tell me any?

Tell. Ay!

They watch no more the avalanche.

Ges. Why so?

Tell. Because they look for thee! The hurricane
 Comes unawares upon them; from its bed
 The torrent breaks, and finds them in its track.

Ges. What do they, then?

Tell. Thank Heaven, it is not thou!
 Thou has perverted nature in them. The earth
 Presents her fruits to them, and is not thank'd!
 The harvest sun is constant, and they scarce
 Return his smile! their flocks and herds increase,
 And they look on as men who count a loss!
 They hear of thriving children born to them,
 And never shake the teller by the hand;
 While those they have, they see grow up and flourish,
 And think as little of caressing them,
 As they were things a deadly plague had smit!—
 There's not a blessing Heaven vouchsafes them, but
 The thought of thee converts into a curse,
 As something they must lose—and richer were
 For ever to have lack'd!

Ges. That pleases me!

I'd have them like their peaks, that never smile,
 Though joyous summer tempt them ne'er so much.

Tell. Nay, but they sometimes smile.

Ges. Ay!—when is that?

Tell. When they discourse of vengeance.

Ges. Vengeance! Dare
 They talk of that?

Tell. Ay, and expect it, too.

Ges. From whence?

Tell. From Heaven!

Ges. From Heaven?

Tell. And from the hands
Which they lift up to it on every hill
For justice on thee!

Ges. Where is thy abode?

Tell. I told thee—in the mountains.

Ges. How lies it?—North or south?

Tell. Nor north, nor south.

Ges. Is't to the east or west, then?

Tell. Where it lies
Concerns thee not.

Ges. It does!

Tell. And if it does,
Thou shalt not learn.

Ges. Art married?

Tell. Married!—Yes.

Ges. And hast a family?

Tell. A son.

Ges. A son!

Sarnem!

Sar. My lord, the boy!

[*GESLER signs to SARNEM to keep silence, and whispering, sends him off.*]

Tell. The boy!—What boy?

Is't mine?—and have they netted my young fledgeling?

Now Heaven support me, if they have! He'll own me,

And share his father's ruin! But a look

Would put him on his guard—yet how to give it!

Now, heart, thy nerve: forget thou'rt flesh—be rock!

They come—They come!—That step!—

That step!—So light upon the ground!

How heavy does it fall upon my heart!

I feel my child!—'Tis he!

We can but perish.

Enter SARNEM with ALBERT, whose eyes are riveted on TELL's bow, which SARNEM carries.

Alb. [*Aside.*] Yes; I was right. It is my father's bow!
For there's my father! I'll not own him, though!

Sar. See!

Alb. What?

Sar. Look there.

Alb. What would you have me see?

Sar. Thy father.

Alb. That is not my father, sir.

Tell. My boy—my boy!—my own brave boy! He's safe!

Sar. [*Aside to GESLER.*] They're like each other.

Ges. Yet I see no sign

Of recognition to betray the tie
That binds a father and his child.

Sar. My lord,

I'm sure it is his father. Look at them:

That boy did spring from him; or never cast
 Came from the mould it fitted! It may be
 A preconcerted thing, 'gainst such a chance,
 That they survey each other coldly thus.
 Besides, with those who lead the mountain life,
 The passions are not taken by surprise
 As ready as with us. They commune still,
 From day to day, with nature's wonders; till
 They see her fiercest terrors without awe,
 And catch, from her, her stern and solemn look,
 That e'en their mirth seems thoughtful.

Ges. [*Rises.*] We shall try.

Lead forth the caiff!

Sar. To a dungeon?

Ges. No;

Into the court.

Sar. The court, my lord?

Ges. And tell

The headsman to make ready. Quick! He dies!
 The slave shall die! You mark'd the boy?

Sar. I did.

He started—'Tis his father!

Ges. We shall see.

Away with him!

Tell. Stop!—stay!

Ges. What would you?

Tell. Time,—

A little time to call my thoughts together!

Ges. Thou shalt not have a minute.

Tell. Some one, then,

To speak with!

Ges. Hence with him!

Tell. A moment, stop!

Let me speak to the boy.

Ges. Is he thy son?

Tell. And if

He were, art thou so lost to nature as

To send me forth before his face to die?

Ges. Well, speak with him. Now, Sarnem, mark them
 well.

[*ALBERT goes to TELL.*]

Tell. Thou dost not know me, boy; and well for thee

Thou dost not. I'm the father of a son

About thy age. I dare not tell thee where

To find him, lest he should be found of those

'Twere not so safe for him to meet with. Thou,

I see, wast born, like him, upon the hills;

If thou shouldst 'scape thy present thralldom, thou

Mayst chance to cross him; if thou shouldst, I pray thee

Relate to him what has been passing here,

And say I laid my hand upon thy head,

And said to thee—If he were here, as thou art,

Thus would I bless him: Mayst thou live, my boy,

To see thy country free, or die for her
As I do!

Sar. Mark!—He weeps.

Tell. Were he my son,
He would not shed a tear! He would remember
The cliff where he was bred, and learn'd to scan
A thousand fathoms' depth of nether air!
Where he was train'd to hear the thunder talk,
And meet the lightning eye to eye! Where last
We spoke together—when I told him, death
Bestow'd the brightest gem that graces life,
Embraced for virtue's sake,—He shed a tear!
Now, were he by, I'd talk to him, and his cheek
Should never blanch, nor moisture dim his eye,—
I'd talk to him!—

Sar. He falters.

Tell. 'Tis too much!

And yet it must be done! I'd talk to him—

Ges. Of what?

Tell. [*Turns to GESLER.*] The mother, tyrant, whom thou
dost make

A widow of! I'd talk to him of her! [*Turns to ALBERT.*

I'd bid him tell her, next to liberty,
Her name was the last words my lips pronounced;
And I would charge him, never to forget
To love and cherish her, as he would have
His father's dying blessing rest upon him!

Sar. You see, what one suggests, the other acts.

Tell [*aside*]. So well he bears it, I, almost, give
way!

My boy! my boy!—O, for the hills!—the hills!

To see him bound along their tops again,
With liberty, so light upon his heel,
That, like the chamois, he flings behind him—

Sar. Was there not all the father in that look?

Ges. Yet 'tis against nature.

Sar. Not if he believes

Owning the boy, the son belike might share

The father's fate.

Ges. I did not think of that!

I thank thee, Sarnem, for the thought. 'Tis well
The boy is not thy son. He is about
To die along with thee.

Tell. To die! For what?

Ges. For having braved my power, as thou hast! Lead
Them forth.

Tell. He's but a child.

Ges. Away with them!

Tell. Perhaps an only child.

Ges. No matter.

Tell. He

May have a mother.

Ges. So the viper hath;
And yet who spares it for the mother's sake?

Tell. I talk to stone! I talk to it as though
'Twere flesh, yet know 'tis none! No wonder! I've
An argument might turn as hard a thing
To flesh—to softest, kindest flesh, that e'er
Sweet Pity chose to lodge her fountain in!—
But, still, 'tis naught but stone! I'll talk to it
No more! Come, my boy! I taught thee how to live!—
I'll show thee how
To die——

Ges. He is thy child!

Tell. [*Bursting into tears, and embracing ALBERT.*] He is
my child!

Ges. I've wrung a tear from him! Thy name?

Tell. My name?

It matters not to keep it from thee, now:

My name is Tell.

Ges. What!—William Tell?

Tell. The same.

Ges. What! he so famed 'bove all his countrymen
For guiding o'er the stormy lake the boat?
And such a master of his bow, 'tis said
His arrows never miss?—Indeed!—I'll take
Exquisite vengeance!—Mark!—I'll spare thy life,
Thy boy's, too.—Both of you are free—on one
Condition.

Tell. Name it.

Ges. I would see you make
A trial of your skill with that same bow
You shoot so well with.

Tell. Please you, name the trial
You would have me make.

Ges. You look upon your boy
As though instinctively you guess'd it.

Tell. Look
Upon my boy!—What mean you? Look upon
My boy as though I guess'd it!—Guess'd the trial
You would have me make! Guess'd it, instinctively!
Instinctively! You do not mean?—No!—No!—
You would not have me make a trial of
My skill upon my child! Impossible!
I do not guess your meaning.

Ges. I would see
Thee hit an apple at the distance of
A hundred paces.

Tell. Is my boy to hold it?

Ges. No.

Tell. No!—I'll send the arrow through the core!

Ges. It is to rest upon his head.

Tell. O, Nature!
Thou hear'st him!

Ges. Thou dost hear the choice I give—
Such trial of the skill, thou'rt master of,
Or death to both of you, not otherwise
To be escaped.

Tell. Oh, monster!

Ges. Wilt thou do it?

Alb. He will! he will!

Tell. Ferocious monster! Make
A father murder his own child!

Ges. Take off

His chains, if he consents.

Tell. With his own hand!

Ges. Does he consent?

Alb. He does.

[*GESLER signs to his Officers, who proceed to take off
TELL'S chains, TELL all the while unconscious of
what they do.*]

Tell. With his own hand!—
Murder his child with his own hand!
The hand I've led him, when an infant, by!
'Tis beyond horror—'Tis most horrible!
Amazement!—'Tis too much for flesh and blood
To bear!—I should be made of steel to stand it!
And I believe I am, almost, about
To turn to some such thing; for feeling grows
Benumb'd within me, that I seem to lose
Almost the power of hating him, and all's
A calm, where all, but now, was raging tempest!

[*His chains, which they have been employed in unloos-
ing, fall off.*]

What!—Do you make me ready, while I wist not?

[*Lifts the manacles from the ground, and holds them to
the soldiers.*]

Villains! put on my chains again. My hands
Are free from blood! and have no gust for it,
That they would drink my child's!—Here!—Here!—I'll
not

Murder my boy for Gesler!

Alb. Father—Father!

You will not hit me, father!

Tell. Hit thee!—Send

The arrow through thy brain!—or, missing that,
Shoot out an eye!—or, if thine eye escapes,
Mangle the cheek I've seen thy mother's lips
Cover with kisses!—Hit thee!—Hit a hair
Of thee, and cleave thy mother's heart! Who's he
That bids me do it!—Show him me,—the monster!
Make him perceptible unto my reason
And heart! In vain my senses vouch for it!
I hear he lives!—I see it!—but it is
A prodigy that nature can't believe!
Ges. Dost thou consent?

Tell. Give me my bow and quiver.

Ges. For what?

Tell. To shoot my boy!

Alb. No, father! no,
To save me!—You'll be sure to hit the apple.

Will you not save me, father?

Tell. Lead me forth!—

I'll make the trial!

Alb. Thank you!

Tell. Thank me!—Do

You know for what?—I will not make the trial,
To take him to his mother in my arms,
And lay him down a corse before her!

Ges. Then

He dies this moment; and you, certainly,
Murder the child, whose life you have a chance
To save, and will not use it.

Tell. Well—I'll do it:

I'll make the trial.

Alb. [*Runs up to TELL and embraces him.*] Father!

Tell. [*Putting ALBERT behind him.*] Speak not to me!

Let me not hear thy voice!—Thou must be dumb:
And so should all things be!—earth should be dumb!
And heaven!—unless its thunders mutter'd at
The deed, and sent a bolt to stop it! Give me
My bow and quiver!

Ges. When all's ready.

Tell. Ready!—

I must be calm, with such a mark to hit!

[*ALBERT is about to take TELL's hand.*

Don't touch me, child!—Don't speak to me!—Lead on!

[*TELL suddenly stops.*

Ges. Why do you stop?

Tell. We have forgot!—'Tis dusk!

Look at that mountain-peak! The sun is down

To all below—will soon be down to that!

You wish to see a trial of my skill,

You ask for one, harder a thousand times

Than e'er the hardest, yet, I e'er essay'd!

You would not have me shoot, without my eyes?

'Twere just the same to shoot, without the light!

The peak, you see, is now gone out!—The court's

To reach—The ground's to choose—The distance

Has to be measured. Then, the boy's to place,

The mark to be adjusted—Where is it?

Where is the apple!—Ere all's ready, 'twill

Be night. As well expect me, were I dead,

To draw a bow, as now!—To-morrow, Gesler.

Ges. Hadst thou not linger'd!—

Tell. It were done—I know

It shall be done to-morrow, wilt thou grant

The time?—'Tis night already!

Ges. Well!—To-morrow!
Take them to separate dungeons!

Tell. To the same!
He's but a child!—He has his part to play!
I would prepare him for it!—It may be
His last night. Let him spend it with his father!

Ges. To the same dungeon!

Tell. Now, my child, thy hand! *[They go out severally.]*

SCENE II.—*Supposed to be in the Vicinity of the Castle.*

Enter WALDMAN and MICHAEL.

Wal. I sore mistrust thee, Michael! If thou play'st
The trifier with me now—

Mic. Dear father, fear not.

Wal. But I do fear thee, boy; and, if not thee,
I fear this stormy night. Dost hear the thunder?

Mic. I do; but it is distant.

Wal. There again!

Mic. It sounds in the direction of the lake.

Wal. Why hast thou brought me hither?

Mic. Worthy sire,

Thou said'st I ne'er would marry till my teeth
Were gone. To show thee, to thy heart's content,
The prophecy was wrong, I've brought thee hither
To play her escort to my gentle bride,
Whom thou shalt see anon.

Wal. He's past all hope!
Am I thy butt to play a jest upon?
Is this a place to jest?

Mic. No place more safe;
No sentinel is here to mar a jest,
Were I disposed for one.

Wal. The storm comes on.
Wouldst hold me here to bide its pelting?

Mic. Hush!
Dear father, hush, unless you'd spoil my wedding,
And mar the only chance of making me
A sober man. And, look, my bridesmen come.

*Enter JAGHELI, with THEODORE, and a band of Young Men,
with a rope-ladder.*

Mic. Welcome, Jagheli! Father, my chief man,
Who means to take example by your son—
Marry a wife, and ever after live
The gravest man in Altorf.

Wal. Let me see
Thy bride, and I'll believe thou mean'st to wed.
It cannot be! There's not a man in Altorf
Would take thee for his son-in-law!

Mic. No man
In Altorf shall call me his son-in-law.

Wal. Where wilt thou get thy bride, then?

Mic. Thou shalt see.

Ha! there's the light—Jagheli, that's the casement!
Come on! Friends, stay you here. And, father, pray
Command your patience, till I give you proof,
Such as shall full content you, that I mean
With all my heart to be a sober man.

[MICHAEL and JAGHELI go out with the rope-ladder.

Wal. Friends, can you help me to a clue to find
This riddle out?

The. We're sworn to secrecy,
And may not answer you.

Wal. I see—I see—

He's not content to make a jest of me,
But brings his friends to join him in the laugh!
He wed!—He take a wife!—He'll bring some boy,
Dress'd in his sister's gown and tucker, with
His voice upon the crack—to pass him off
For 's bride upon me. I'll begone, and balk [More thunder.
His most irreverent humour! Friends, adieu!
I give you joy of this fair sport. [Going.

Enter MICHAEL and AGNES—JAGHELI and ANNELI.

Mic. Sweet love,
Fear not! I'll give thee to safe warding, till
I take thee to mine own. Fair Anneli,
Go with thy cousin. Father, to thy care
We trust these jewels, that shall keep us rich
For life! Don't wonder, Sweet—There's not a care
This day may cost thee, but each after-day
Shall bring as many golden joys as hours
To pay thee for.

Ann. I trust they mean us honest!

Wal. A woman, as I live!

Agn. Honest or not,
No matter now, dear coz; our fortune's told—
We're caught!

Wal. A woman, too.

Mic. By hands so kind!—
So loving in their tendance on their prize,
You'd not exchange captivity for freedom.

Agn. Don't try us!

Mic. Not unless you choose.

Ann. Dear coz!
Let us go back.

Agn. Nay, coz, we'll e'en go on.
These gallants trusted once, to trust them on,
They say, is sometimes to secure the debt.

Wal. Fair lady, I will be his bail, to see
Due payment made—if you will trust to me.

Mic. Dear father, when you hear me jest again,
You'll drink your grandson's health that is to be,
And pardon me for him.—Away!—Away!
These heads demand a kinder canopy
Than this rough sky affords.

Wal. Go you not with us?

Mic. No; our brides forbid.
Nor may we see them till we bring the priest
To visit them to-morrow; and, besides,
We've comrades here, bright gallants, as ourselves
Were once, of whom we'd take a handsome leave.
This hour, that parts us thus, we'll soon forgive,
For the fair fellows that shall follow it.
Good night—Sound sleep—Sweet dreams—good night—good
night— [WALDMAN, AGNES, and ANNELI go out.
Now, friends, the casement! There the ladder hangs;
Climb fast, but silently. The chamber on
The postern opens, and is lock'd, within.
Thence we can watch the motions of our friends,
And at the moment lend our sudden aid,
When most it may avail.—On—On and up!

[Young Men go out.

Now, Michael, here's the closing of thy jests,
Or making of thee!—Fortune hold thy friend,
There's not a sober man in Altorf but
To own thy brows, would wear the cap and bells! [Goes out.

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Tell's Cottage.*—*Melchtal asleep upon a couch, at the head of which Emma is watching.*

EMMA [*rising, and coming forward*].

I never knew a weary night before!
I have seen the sun a dozen times go down,
And still no William,—and the storm was on;
Yet have I laid me down, in peace, to sleep,
The mountain with the lightning all a-blaze,
And shaking with the thunder,—but, to-night,
Mine eyes refuse to close! The old man rests.
Pain hath outworn itself, and turn'd to ease.
How deathly calm's the night! What's that? I'm grown
An idiot with my fears. I do not know
The avalanche! Great Power that hurls it down,
Watch o'er my boy, and guide his little steps!
What keeps him? 'Tis but four hours' journey, hence;
He'd rest; then four hours back again. What keeps him?

Erni would sure be found by him—He knows
The track, well as he knows the road to Altorf!

Mel. Help!

[*In his sleep.*]

Emma. What's the matter! Only the old man dreaming.
He thinks again they're pulling out his eyes.

I'm sick with terror! Merciful powers! what's this
That fills my heart with horrible alarm,
And yet it cannot see!

Mel. [*Waking.*] Where am I?

Emma. Father!

Mel. My daughter, is it thou? Thank heaven, I'm here.
Is't day yet?

Emma. No.

Mel. Is't far on the night?

Emma. Methinks, about the turn on't.

Mel. Is the boy

Come back?

Emma. No, father.

Mel. Nor thy husband?

Emma. No.

Mel. A woful wife and mother have I made thee!
Would thou hadst never seen me.

Emma. Father!

Mel. Child?

Emma. Methinks I hear a step!—I do! [*Knocking.*] A
knock!

Mel. 'Tis William!

Emma. No, it is not William's knock. [*Opens the door.*]
I told you so! Your will?

Enter STRANGER.

Stran. Seeing a light,
I e'en made bold to knock, to ask for shelter,
For I have miss'd my way.

Emma. Whence come you, friend?

Stran. From Altorf.

Emma. Altorf!—Any news from thence?

Stran. Ay! News to harrow parents' hearts, and make
The barren bless themselves that they are childless!

Emma. May heaven preserve my boy!

Mel. What says thy news?

Stran. Art thou not Melchtal—he whose eyes 'tis said
The tyrant has torn out?

Mel. Yes, friend, the same.

Stran. Is this thy cottage?

Mel. No; 'tis William Tell's.

Stran. 'Tis William Tell's!—And that's his wife!—Good
night.

Emma. [*Rushing between him and the door.*] Thou stirr'st
not hence until thy news be told!

Stran. My news? In sooth 'tis nothing thou wouldst heed.

Emma. 'Tis something none should heed so well as I!

Stran. I must be gone.

Emma. Thou seest a tigress, friend,
Spoil'd of her mate and young, and yearning for them.
Don't thwart her! Come, thy news! What fear'st thou, man;
What more has she to dread, who reads thy looks,
And knows the most has come. Thy news? Is't bondage?

Stran. It is.

Emma. Thank heaven it is not death. Of one—
Or two?

Stran. Of two.

Emma. A father and a son?
Is't not?

Stran. It is.

Emma. My husband and my son
Are in the tyrant's power! There's worse than that!
What's that, is news to harrow parents' breasts,
The which the thought to only tell, 'twould seem,
Drives back the blood to thine?—Thy news, I say!
Wouldst thou be merciful, this is not mercy!
Wast thou the mark, friend, of the bowman's aim,
Wouldst thou not have the fatal arrow speed,
Rather than watch it hanging in the string?
Thou'lt drive me mad! Let fly at once!—

Mel. Thy news from Altorf, friend, whate'er it is!

Stran. To save himself and child from certain death,
Tell is to hit an apple resting on
The stripling's head.

Mel. My child! my child!—
Speak to me!—Stranger, hast thou kill'd her?

Emma. No!
No, father. I'm the wife of William Tell;
Oh but to be a man! to have an arm
To fit a heart bursting with the sense of wrong!
Unnatural—insufferable wrong!
When makes the tyrant trial of his skill?

Stran. To-morrow.

Emma. Spirit of the lake and hill,
Inspire thy daughter! On the head of him
Who makes his pastime of a mother's pangs,
Launch down thy vengeance by a mother's hand.
Know'st the signal when the hills shall rise? [*To MELCHTAL.*

Mel. Are they to rise?

Emma. I see thou knowest naught.

Stran. Something's on foot! 'Twas only yesterday
That, travelling from our canton, I espied,
Slow toiling up a steep, a mountaineer
Of brawny limb, upon his back a load
Of fagots bound. Curious to see what end
Was worthy of such labour, after him
I took the cliff: and saw its lofty top
Receive his load, which went but to augment
A pile of many another.

Emma. 'Tis by fire!
Fire is the signal for the hills to rise— [*Rushes out.*
Mel. Went she not forth?
Stran. She did—she's here again
And brings with her a lighted brand.
Mel. My child,
What dost thou with a lighted brand?

Re-enter EMMA, with a brand.

Emma. Prepare
To give the signal for the hills to rise!
Mel. Where are the fagots, child, for such a blaze?
Emma. I'll find the fagots, father. [*Exit.*
Mel. Is she gone
Again?

Stran. She is—I think into her chamber.
Emma. [*Rushing in.*] Father, the pile is fired!
Mel. What pile, my child?
Emma. The joists and rafters of our cottage, father!
Mel. Thou hast not fired thy cottage!—but thou hast!
Alas, I hear the crackling of the flames!
Emma. Say'st thou alas! when I could say, thank heaven?
Father, this blaze will set the land a-blaze
With fire that shall preserve, and not destroy it,
Blaze on! blaze on! Oh, mayst thou be a beacon
To light its sons enslaved to liberty!
How fast it spreads! A spirit's in the fire;
It knows the work it does. [*Goes to the door, and opens it*
The land is free!

Yonder's another blaze. Beyond that shoots
Another up!—Anon will every hill
Redden with vengeance. Father, come! Whate'er
Betides us, worse we're certain can't befall,
And better may! Oh, be it liberty—
Safe hearths and homes, husbands and children. Come—
It spreads apace. Blaze on—blaze on—blaze on! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE THE LAST.—*Without the Castle.*

Enter, slowly, several Citizens, as if observing something following them, VERNER, and THEODORE.

Ver. The pace they're moving at is that of men
About to do the work of death. Some wretch
Is doom'd to suffer. Should it be my friend—
Should it be Tell!

The. No doubt 'tis some good man.

Ver. Poor Switzerland! poor country! Not a son
Is left thee now, that's worth the name of one.
'Tis not a common man, with such parade,

They lead to death. I count four castellains
Already.

The. There's a fifth.

Ver. And Sarnem, too!

Do you see him?

The. Yes: and Gesler follows him.

Who can it be?

Ver. We'll see. He's coming, now—
'Tis William Tell!

The. Verner, do you know the boy
That follows him?

Ver. A boy! It is his son!

What horror's to be acted? Do you see
The headsman?

The. No! I see no headsman there,
No apparatus for the work of death.
Perhaps they're not to suffer!

Ver. Lo you how
The women clasp their hands, and now and then
Look up to heaven! You see that some do weep.
No headsman's there; but Gesler's at no loss
For means of cruelty because there lacks
A headsman!

Enter PIERRE.

Pie. Horrible!—most horrible
Decree!—To save his own and Albert's life,
Tell is to hit an apple resting on
The head of his own child!

*Enter, slowly, Burghers and Women, LUTOLD, RODOLPH,
GERARD, SARNEM, GESLER, TELL, ALBERT, and a Soldier
bearing TELL's bow and quiver—another with a basket of
apples—Soldiers, &c.*

Ges. That is your ground. Now shall they measure, thence.
A hundred paces. Take the distance.

Tell. Is
The line a true one?

Ges. True or not, what is't
To thee?

Tell. What is't to me? A little thing,
A very little thing—A yard or two,
Is nothing here or there—were it a wolf
I shot at! Never mind!

Ges. Be thankful, slave,
Our grace accords thee life on any terms.

Tell. I will be thankful, Gesler! Villain, stop!
You measure to the sun.

Ges. And what of that?
What matter, whether to or from the sun?

Tell. I'd have it at my back!—The sun should shine
Upon the mark, and not on him that shoots.

I cannot see to shoot against the sun!—

I will not shoot against the sun!

Ges. Give him his way!—Thou hast cause to bless my mercy.

Tell. I shall remember it. I'd like to see
The apple I'm to shoot at.

Soldier [*with the basket of apples*]. Here!

Ges. Show me
The basket!—There—

Tell. You've pick'd the smallest one.

Ges. I know I have.

Tell. O! do you?—But you see
The colour on't is dark—I'd have it light,
To see it better.

Ges. Take it as it is:

Thy skill will be the greater if thou hitt'st it.

Tell. True!—True!—I didn't think of that—I wonder
I did not think of that.—Give me some chance
To save my boy! I will not murder him
If I can help it—for the honour of
The form thou wear'st, if all the heart be gone.

Ges. Well! choose thyself.

[*Hands a basket of apples:—TELL takes one.*]

Tell. Have I a friend among
The lookers on?

Ver. Here, Tell!

Tell. I thank thee, Verner!
He is a friend that does not mind a storm
To shake a hand with us! I must be brief.
When once the bow is drawn, we cannot take
The shot too soon! Verner, whatever be
The issue of this hour, the common cause
Must not stand still! Let not to-morrow's sun
Set on the tyrant's banner.—Verner! Verner!
The boy!—the boy!—Think'st thou he has the courage
To stand it?

Ver. Yes.

Tell. Does he tremble?

Ver. No.

Tell. Art sure?

Ver. I am.

Tell. How looks he?

Ver. Clear and smilingly.

If you doubt it—look yourself.

Tell. No—no—my friend,
To hear it is enough!

Ver. He bears himself

So much above his years—

Tell. I know!—I know.

Ver. With constancy so modest—

Tell. I was sure

He would—

Ver. And looks with such relying love
And reverence upon you

Tell. Man! Man! Man!

No more! Already I'm too much the father
To act the man!—Verner, no more, my friend!
I would be flint—flint—flint! Don't make me feel
I'm not—You do not mind me!—Take the boy
And set him, Verner, with his back to me.—
Set him upon his knees—and place the apple
Upon his head, so that the stem may front me—
Thus, Verner—Charge him to keep steady—I'll hit him
I'll hit the apple!—Verner, do all this
More briefly than I tell it thee.

Ver. Come, Albert!

Alb. May I not speak with him before I go?

Ver. No—

Alb. I would only kiss his hand.

Ver. You must not.

Alb. I must!—I cannot go from him without!

Ver. It is his will you should.

Alb. His will, is it?

I am content, then—come.

Tell. My boy!

[*Holding out his arms to him.*

Alb. My father!

[*Running into TELL's arms.*

Tell. If thou canst bear it, should not I?—Go now,

My son—and keep in mind that I can shoot.—

Go, boy—Be thou but steady, I shall hit

The apple. [*Kisses him.*] Go!—God bless thee!—Go!—My
bow! [*SARNEM gives the bow.*

Thou wilt not fail thy master, wilt thou?—Thou

Hast never fail'd him yet, old servant.—No!

I'm sure of thee—I know thy honesty,

Thou'rt stanch!—Stanch!—I'd deserve to find thee trea-
cherous,

Could I suspect thee so. Come, I will stake

My all upon thee! Let me see my quiver.

Ges. Give him a single arrow.

Tell. Do you shoot?

Int. I do.

Tell. Is't so you pick an arrow, friend?

The point, you see, is blunt, the feather jagg'd;

That's all the use 'tis fit for.

[*Breaks it.*

Ges. Let him have

Another.

Tell. Why, 'tis better than the first,

But yet not good enough for such an aim

As I'm to take. 'Tis heavy in the shaft:

I'll not shoot with it! [*Throws it away.*] Let me see my
quiver.

Bring it! 'tis not one arrow in a dozen

I'd take to shoot with at a dove, much less

A dove like that? What is't you fear? I'm but
 A naked man!—A wretched naked man!
 Your helpless thrall, alone in the midst of you,
 With every one of you a weapon in
 His hand. What can I do in such a strait
 With all the arrows in that quiver? Come,
 Will you give it me or not?

Ges. It matters not.

Show him the quiver. You're resolved, I see,
 Nothing shall please you.

[TELL kneels and picks out an arrow, which he hides under his vest, and then selects another.]

Tell. Am I so?—That's strange,
 That's very strange!—Is the boy ready?

Ver. Yes.

Tell. I'm ready too!—Keep silence, every one!
 And stir not for my child's sake!—And let me have
 Your prayers—your prayers—and be my witnesses,
 That if his life's in peril from my hand,
 'Tis only for the chance of saving it!
 Now, friends, for mercy's sake keep motionless
 And silent.

[TELL shoots, and a shout of wonder and exultation bursts from the crowd. TELL falls on his knees and with difficulty supports himself.]

Ver. *[Rushing in with ALBERT.]* Thy boy is safe; no hair of
 him is touch'd!

Alb. Father, I'm safe—your Albert's safe. Dear father,
 Speak to me! speak to me!

Ver. He cannot, boy!

Alb. You grant him life?

Ges. I do.

Alb. And we are free?

Ges. You are.

Alb. Thank Heaven! thank Heaven!

Ver. Open his vest,
 And give him air.

[ALBERT opens his father's vest, and an arrow drops—TELL starts, fixes his eyes on ALBERT, and clasps him to his breast.]

Tell. My boy! my boy!

Ges. For what

Hid you that arrow in your breast? Speak, slave!

Ver. He cannot!—He's o'ercome! *[Whispers to TELL.]*

William, the tyrant stands aloof from all!

Thy deadly aim, alone, transfixes him,

And with him all the rest, through fear for him;

While pace by pace thou canst withdraw;—But gain

A dozen yards, thou'rt free! I'll mind the boy!

Ges. How came that arrow in thy breast? Speak, slave!

Tell. To kill thee, tyrant, had I slain my son!

And now beware ! [TELL suddenly takes aim at GESLER.
 Stir thou, or any, stir !
 The shaft is in thy heart !

[TELL retreats slowly, while VERNER removes ALBERT.
 GESLER and the rest, following TELL with their eyes,
 remain in breathless and motionless suspense.

Sar. He shoots !

Ges. O ! [Falls dead, transfixed with the arrow.

Sar. Pursue him !—Hold ! A host of friends have join'd
 him,

And all in arms !—They now advance !

Lut. On this side

Another speeds !

Sar. Back to the castle !

Lut. Look ! [MICHAEL and his friends appear on the ramparts.
 The castle is betray'd !

Mic. We thank you, friends,
 For changing quarters with us !

Sar. Ha !—Shut out !
 Surrounded !

[Enter on one side, Swiss, led by TELL, &c., and on the
 other, EMMA, followed by Swiss, led by ERNI.

Tell. Yield ! Resistance now is hopeless !

Your lives are spared !—The tyrant's will suffice !

Emma, your child ! We are free, my countrymen !

Our country is free ! Austrians, you'll quit a land,

You never had a right to ; and remember,

The country's never lost, that's left a son

To struggle with the foe that would enslave her !

END OF WILLIAM TELL.

ALFRED THE GREAT;

OR,

The Patriotic King:
AN HISTORICAL PLAY.

Dedicated

(BY PERMISSION).

TO

HIS MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY,
WILLIAM THE FOURTH,

A PATRIOT MONARCH,

DESTINED WITH THE BLESSING OF GOD, TO RESTORE THE DILAPIDATED
FABRIC OF HIS COUNTRY'S PROSPERITY,

AND

TO RESCUE A DEVOTED PEOPLE FROM THE RAVAGES OF THE WORST
OF INVADERS—

CORRUPTION.

June, 1831.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT DRURY LANE, IN 1831.)

ENGLISH.

<i>Alfred</i> , King of England	Mr. MACREADY.
<i>Oddune</i>	Mr. J. VINING.
<i>Oswith</i>	Mr. H. WALLACK.
<i>Edric</i>	Mr. YOUNGE.
<i>Egbert</i>	Mr. THOMPSON.
<i>Kenrick</i>	Mr. COOKE.
<i>Edwy</i>	Mr. SINCLAIR.
<i>Oswald</i>	Mr. CATHIE.
<i>Arthur</i>	Mr. EATON.
<i>Edgar</i>	Mr. HONNER.
<i>Edwin</i>	Mr. FENTON.
<i>Conrad</i>	Mr. HAMMERTON.
<i>Ethelred</i>	Miss MARSHALL.
<i>Soldier</i>	Mr. DOWSING.

<i>Elswith</i> , the Queen	Miss HUDDART.
<i>Maude</i>	Mrs. C. JONES.

DANES.

<i>Guthrum</i>	Mr. COOPER.
<i>Amund</i>	Mr. BLAND.
<i>Oscar</i>	Mr. C. JONES.
<i>Haldane</i>	Mr. HOWARD.
<i>Otho</i>	Mr. YARNOLD.
<i>Soldier</i>	Mr. HOWELL.
<i>Priest</i>	Mr. S. JAMES.
<i>Boy</i>	Mr. FENTON.

<i>Ina</i> , Guthrum's Daughter	Miss PHILLIPS.
<i>Elith</i>	Miss FAUCIT.

ALFRED THE GREAT.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Danish Camp.*

Enter EDITH with a bow and quiver, followed by INA attended by a Boy, who carries a bow and quiver.

Edith. Come, let us try who'll hit the target first.

Ina. My bow hath got a cast, and will not shoot.

Edith. In sooth your bow hath got no cast at all,

'Tis true as mine. Take mine—I'll shoot with it.

Ina. Yours fits me not—'tis harder far to draw.

Edith. Try it.

Ina. No, no; I will not shoot to-day.

Besides, my arrows all have lost the nock

Edith. Here's store enough of mine.

Ina. Good Edith, no!

Entreat me not—I will not shoot to-day.

Edith. Why, so 'twas yesterday! Fie, Ina, fie!

To tax thy bow with fault it never had.

The bow that hath a cast is thy changed will,

Thy nockless shafts are marr'd alone by that.

You want to love this sport! From morn till night

Your pastime 'twas, and now you love it not!

What love you, sweet, instead?

Ina. What should I love?

Edith. Nay, Ina—you alone can answer that.

Has Otho's suit prevail'd?

Ina. When did a flower

Spring from a weed, that love should grow from hate?

Edith. What! call you love a flower? A flower looks gay—

So looks not love! A flower is sweet—Who says

That love is sweet? Does sweetness garner pain

For those that own it? Rather love's a weed

Oft taken for a flower—found out at last

With a sigh! O, Ina, you have pluck'd this weed!

Come, own it, Ina!

Ina. Wherefore do you look

Thus at me?

Edith. Why do you, my Ina, look

At anything but me? Why do your eyes

Of late their lustre lavish on the ground,
That cares not for it? And your honey'd breath,
That should be given to your silver tongue
To make sweet music of, why do you waste
Oftener on thankless and contentless sighs?
Come, tell me, Ina, what has happen'd to you?

Ina. Alas! I know not.

Edith. Do you say alas!

O, then, 'tis over with you! Why, you're in tears;
Only the drop's but half-way out, that soon
Would make way for the rest, held not your eye
Its crystal door upon it! Lean your head
Upon the bosom of your friend, and give
Your secret vent—for sure you have one, Ina!

Ina. Not I!—Come, take your bow!—I'll shoot with you!
My quiver 'gainst a shaft, I'll be the first
To hit the mark. Set up the target, boy! [*Boy goes out.*]
Now for the eye of the eye. [*Shoots.*] In sooth I've miss'd,
Wide by a mile—but thou hast shot full home!
I've pluck'd it, Edith, flower or weed. If weed,
O! weed most like a flower.—O precious weed!
There's not a flower so fair, I'd deem thee graced
To call thee by its name!

Boy [*running in*].

The battle's won!

I see our troops come winding up the glen,
Their spears and banners wreath'd—a token, sure,
Of victory. [*Goes out.*]

Edith. Let's meet them, Ina:—Come!

Why, sweet, what's this? How pale you turn! How damp's
Your little hand! Nay, now 'tis snow indeed.
Cold as 'tis white! Did you not rightly hear?
He says the battle's won!

Ina. I know he does!

Edith. Is't with such cheeks you listen to such news?
This would become the daughter of the foe.

Ina. The foe! The foe!

Edith. What! find'st thou something sweet
In that harsh word, that thou repeat'st it thus?

Ina. Harsh word! Now, harsh art thou to call it so;
Jars it thine ear? There's music in't to mine!
Stands it for what thou'dst shun? that's what I'd seek!
Yea! 'fore the things that brother, sister, friend—
Soft titles—stand for! Ina loves a foe!
That foe has lost the battle we have won.

Edith. Why, sweet, where sawest thou this gentle foe?

Ina. Even here. When last the Saxon ask'd a truce,
Curious to see their herald, I remain'd
Behind you in my father's tent. He came!
O, with what grace of rarest manhood! Proud
His gait, yet bearing onwards grace, so bland,

As made all hearts give willing way to him.
 He spake, and I took root to where I stood;
 And so did all. Not Guthrum moved! O Edith,
 How should it be with Ina? Where were her eyes?
 What were her ears about? What did her heart?
 Dost feel it throbbing now? 'Tis quiet, now,
 To what 'twas then! How often have you tried
 To fix your naked eye upon the sun;
 And when you've ta'en it off, how has the day,
 From gazing his bright face, been turn'd to night;
 Flowers, verdure, darken'd; yea, the orb himself
 From burning gold, grown ink. 'Twas so with me
 When sight of him was gone! Night turn'd to day
 Again with you—but light's gone out with Ina
 E'er since the day she look'd upon her foe!

Edith. Hence, Ina, hence awhile! your father comes;
 He must find looks of welcome.

Ina. Have with you.

You've won my secret, Edith! Guard it for me. [*They go out.*]

Enter GUTHRUM, AMUND, OSCAR, HALDANE, and Danes.

Guth. Halt, comrades, halt! and change your toil for rest,
 And then from rest to feasting! We'll carouse
 A moon for this last victory, that leaves
 No future foe to front us. England's won!
 So thinn'd her sons by this last overthrow,
 And utterly discomfited, enow
 Remain her not to make another stand,
 Durst Alfred rally them—their throneless king!
 We shall not need to cross the main again
 To prop us with fresh succours. Here we'll build
 Another Danish kingdom, fairer far
 Than what we've left! What, ho there! bring me wine!
 I'm thirsty from our march. Ho! wine, I say!
 A seat! Here, in the open air, we'll drink,
 Or ere we part, to our new Denmark. Chief
 And followers shall pledge me. Wine I say!

Enter OTHO.

Otho. Guthrum, your priests prepare a sacrifice.
 The God expects his victims. Shall he have them?

Guth. Take them! You know the God must have his due!
 [*OTHO goes out.*]

Give him the wine! my thirst's gone off—yet, no;
 'Tis fit that I drink first. [*Drinks.*] To our new Denmark!
 By Odin! 'twas a glorious victory!
 The God deserves his victims—he shall have them!
 Odin's the God of war! If he drinks blood,
 He has a right. Who dares deny the God
 His victims? Amund, take the cup! We fought
 Like Odin's sons. I saw you, Amund, cleave
 In twain a Saxon at a single blow.

Am. My Lord, 'twas slight to what your falchion did,
That, through the casquéd head and mailéd chine,
Made way at one dire wheel!

Guth. Ay, did it so?
I do believe it did! No more of that!
Give me your hand, good Amund—For that blow
Lord of a gallant castle shalt thou be.

Pass on the cup to Oscar. Oscar! ha!
Show me thy falchion's edge—Look, Amund, here—
I saw him keep at once five Saxon swords
At bay! Well done!—Oscar, be sure you sit
On my right hand at banquet.

Osc. Mighty chief,
I mark'd your eye was on me! 'twas a sword
That more than balanced all the odds against me!
Besides, your arm, just then, had turn'd the fight,
That seem'd at first against us.

Guth. Was it so?
I don't remember it. Good Oscar, ask
What portion of the spoil thou wilt—'tis thine!

OTHO re-enters.

Otho. The victims, Chief, are ready.

Guth. So! enough!

Otho. Eight of them did we take by lot. The ninth
Is self-devoted to preserve the life
Of one, to whom we were about to hold
The fatal urn.

Guth. Indeed! a chief?

Otho. The port
Of both bespeaks them men of proud degree.

Guth. Have 'em before us; we would see them. [*Otho*
goes out.] Guthrum

Loves war! Would leave the banquet any time
To mingle in the fight. He loves a friend;
But more than friend's embrace, he loves the hug
Foe gives to foe. Yet is not Guthrum cruel!
His foe disarm'd he never yet could smite!
He likes a noble deed, although the sword
Achieves it not. How say you, friends, were't right
To save the man, who loves his friend so well,
He lays down life for him—although a gift
To Odin?

Am. Ere the priest his sacred hand
Lays on the victim, it has, still, been lawful
To snatch him from his doom!

Hal. Brhoves him though
To swear eternal league with Odin's sons.

Guth. He'll do it, Haldane! Ha! I saw thee match'd
In fight, for once. That Saxon found thee, Haldane,
With two that back'd thee, livelier work than suits
A sluggard's hand. Thy seconds both were down—

Was't not so, Haldane?—and thyself, methought,
Madest rather backward way, when I despatch'd
Fresh aid to thee, with charge, at any risk,
To take thy gallant foe alive. 'Twas you,
Oscar, that I so charged.

Osc. My liege, he lives;
O'ercome by force that could not make him yield,
But bore him down to earth, where, as he lay,
The strife his fetter'd limbs were forced to drop;
His eye continued still, that shot around
Deadly defiance in the face of death.

Guth. Foe worthy Guthrum's sword! Was't not the herald,
Last sent us from the English king?

Osc. The same.

Guth. I'd like to see that man, again!

Osc. He's here.

Enter OTHO, with OSWIT and EDRIC chained.

Guth. This he!—Men's looks reflect their deeds as well
As nature's. One of these is he, whose thought
Of lofty friendship overlooks himself,
When fix'd on his friend's need—This is the man!

Otho. It is, my Lord.

Guth. Is he thy friend, whose life
Thou count'st a thing so precious, thou wouldst give
Thine own to purchase it?

Os. He is.

Guth. What rich
And heavy debt hast thou incurr'd to him,
To pay so large return as takes thy all?

Os. And think'st thou friendship barter kindness?
'Tis not because that such or such a time
He help'd my purse, or stood me thus or thus
In stead, that I go bound for him, or take
His quarrel up! With friends, all services
Are ever gifts, that glad the donor most!
Who rates them otherwise, he only takes
The face of friend to mask a usurer.
I give my life for him, not for the service
He did me yesterday, or any day;
But for the love I bear him every day,
Nor ask if he returns!

Guth. Be Guthrum's friend,
Thou livest, and thy friend for sake of thee!

Edr. O, generous proffer!

Os. Wouldst accept it?

Edr. Yes.

Os. Then do.

Guth. Remove their chains.

Os. First take off his.

Guth. Now thine!

Os. Long as my country wears your chains,

Guthrum, beware how you unrivet mine;
 For once you set my arm at liberty,
 The thing which first 'twill seek will be a sword,
 To right my master, royal Alfred's cause—
 And hack my injured country's fetters off!

Guth. Saxon, beware! The smooth and gentle tide
 Of mercy thwarted, turns a torrent, oft
 O'erwhelming as the raging flood itself
 Of vengeance!

Os. Here I stand—let it come down!
 I care not when or where its fury rushes!

Enter INA and EDITH (as yet unperceived by GUTHRUM, &c.).

Ina. [*Aside to EDITH.*] 'Tis he!

Guth. Is Guthrum braved!—Is he the son
 Of Odin!—marches, in his van, the God
 Of War!—lies o'er the humbled necks of hosts
 Of prostrate foes his path; and brooks he thus
 Defiance, and from one earth-sprung—the spawn
 Of the vile clod he treads on! Stood thy king
 Alfred, of whom thou vaunting spokest, stood he
 Where now thou stand'st, his regal eye had fallen
 Beneath the frown of Guthrum.

Os. Not beneath
 The frown of Guthrum's god, were Odin real
 As he is fabled!

Guth. Give him to the God!

Ina. Father!

Guth. My Ina!

Os. Ha! could I believe
 He was not born of earth—*there were, indeed,*
 An argument could make me!

Guth. I have given thee
 Thy choice of life or death—thou choosest death;
 Then take it.

Ina. Father!

Guth. Ah, thou ever art
 My sweet and welcome calm, that glads me, sun-like,
 When summer days are breathless with the joy
 Of his enriching beam.—I'm smooth again!
 Not a ruffle! not a ruffle!—Is he not gone? Hence with him!

Ina. No, no, my father!

Guth. Wouldst thou have me set
 A-foam again!—Nay, Ina, if I rage,
 'Tis not at thee!—Why start away from me?
 Come back, and cling to me again! close, close!
 My child, beloved and only, tell me, if
 Thou canst, how much I love thee!

Otko. Saxon, come.

Ina. No, no!

Guth. How, Ina!

Ina. Thou didst not repeat

Thy order.

Guth. But I will.

Ina. O, speak to me!—

I'm glad the fight is o'er. You won it soon!

You won it safely, else it were not won!

How stood the plume I fasten'd on your crest?

Well! well! How many eyes were on that plume,

Tossing, as proud it rode the stormy wave

Of battle; still the more majestic,

The fiercer wax'd the swell!

Guth. My child, my child!

Ay, every inch my own.—When thou wast born,

I wish'd a son. I would not give thee now

For troops of them!—What, Otho!—

Ina. Your scarf!—Is't whole?

No, no, a rent is here! Come, take it off.

False as it is, you shall not wear't again!

I'll knit you another, every loop of which

I'll fasten with a spell, that it shall prove

An amulet against the thrust of spear,

Or stroke of falchion!

Guth. So you shall! You make

A child of your father! Otho!

Ina. Not a wound!

For ever in the thickest of the fight,

And not a wound! Thank Odin! Yet I would

There were a slight one—for the 'tending on't!

No! no! and yet in sooth I would there were!

I know not what I say! I prate! I prate!

Thank Odin, you are safe!

Guth. My girl! my girl!

My idle girl! my foolish, loving child!

My Ina! What! and have I won the fight,

And shalt not thou become the richer for't?

By Odin, but thou shalt! Come, ask me something!

Name me some gift. Come, measure, if thou canst,

Thy father's love for thee! What wilt thou ask?

Ask me a kingdom! Come?

Ina. No kingdom, father,

I'd ask of thee—only one little boon.

Guth. What is't? Speak out!

Ina. Is't granted?

Guth. By the God!

Out with't—What is't? What little boon is this

Which only wants the naming, to be thine,

And yet thou seem'st to lack the breath to name?

Ina. Is that a rivet of your armour broke?

No, no!

Guth. And if it were, no blame to it.

It turn'd an English javelin. At my feet

The weapon fell: I snatch'd it up again,

And sent it hissing at its master's head!

Enter Soldier.

Soldier. This packet found we, Guthrum, in the tent
Of Alfred.

Guth. Bring'st no tidings of himself?

'Tis certain that he left the field unhurt!

Have they return'd whom in pursuit of him—

Soldier. They have. Three days they track'd him; on the
fourth,

All trace of him was lost; but, by report,

Alone—without a single follower—

The royal fugitive pursues his way,

Broken in hopes, as fortunes.

Guth. We may chance

To overtake yet, or light upon him.

Give me the paper.

[*Takes the packet, and reads.*]

Os. Such things I have heard of—angel forms,

Which magic raises—mocking fairest things

Of earth; but fairer—to entrance earth's sons—

Things they would deem of heaven, though found on earth!

Which, once beheld, their helpless functions seize

With ravishment, that leaves them but the power

To gaze or listen, till no warning effort

Of reason, or stronger will avails, to tear

The charmed sense away!

Edr. Would I were chain'd

Again! Her pity makes his freedom poor,

That can't awaken it.

Guth. [*Returning packet.*] It matters not,
A string of Saxon rhymes! Can Alfred fight?

Who flourishes the pen so much, can scarce

Be master of the sword! He plays the harp,

As they report—the harp! Give me the strain

Of the resounding shield! Come, Ina, name

The boon thou'dst ask.

Ina. When thou art happy, what

Most wishest thou?

Guth. That happiness may last.

Ina. No, no! not that. Thou wishest others happy.

Guth. I do! I do!

Ina. And so do I. When I

Am happy, I'd have all things like me—not

That live and move alone, but even such

As lack their faculties. Then could I weep,

That flowers should smile without perception of

The sweetness they discourse. Yea, into rocks

Would I infuse soft sense to fill them with

The spirit of sweet joy, that everything

Should thrill as I do! Then, were I a queen,

I'd portion out my realms among my friends,

Unstud my crown for strangers, and my coffers

Empty in purchasing from foes their frowns,

Till I had bought them out; that all should be
 One reign of smiles around me! I am happy
 To-day—to-day! that brings thee, father, back,
 The hundredth time, in triumph and in safety!
 This day, that smiles so bounteous upon Ina,
 She'd make to smile e'en upon Ina's foe—
 Let not the Saxon die!

Guth. He lives!—My child!

What makes thee gasp?

Ina. How near—How near to you
 Was death that day! 'Twas well for Ina that
 Your armour proved so true. She had not else
 A father, now, to ask a boon of, and
 To get it soon as ask'd!

Guth. He lives thy slave!

Had he been wise, he now were Guthrum's friend.

Ina. His chains—

Guth. 'Tis thine to take them off or not.

What Guthrum gives, he gives! He is thy slave.

Come, Saxon, thou art free! [*To* *EDRIC.*]

[*GUTHRUM and Chiefs go out.*]

Edr. Would I were chain'd

Again.

[*Goes out.*]

Os. I gaze, and with my tracéd eyes
 Drink magic in. I know it, still I gaze.
 And, yet, can bane reside in aught so sweet?
 Can poison lodge in that consummate flower,
 Which blends the virtues of all blooming things,
 And with the wealth of its fair neighbourhood,
 Enriches very barrenness, that near it
 Grows sightly, e'en, and sweet?

Ina. How's this, my Edith?

My wish, obtain'd, I tremble to enjoy!
 I need but speak the word, and he is free;
 Yet, there I let him stand in shackles still,
 Whose chains to doff, were there no other way,
 I'd go in bonds myself.—Sweet, be my tongue;
 Bid them remove his chains.

Edith. Unbind him, there!

Soldier. My hand is useless, from the fight to-day.

Ina. Try you!

Edith. [*Trying to take off his chains.*] It baffles me! It hath
 a knack

I am not mistress of.—Will you not try?

[*INA approaches, and takes off his chains.*]

You've done't.—Why, what's the matter with you, Ina?

Hast put his fetters on, that here you stand

As though bereft of motion? Rouse thee, Ina!

Ina. O, for a minute, Edith, in thy bosom,
 To weep there! Ay, to weep!—to shed such tears
 As shower down smiling cheeks, when sudden joy
 Pours in to the o'erfilling of the heart,

That look'd not for't; and knows not what to do
With all its treasure!

Os. I do feel it still!

Still do I feel the touch of her fair hand!
How passing fair! The driven snow itself
Might make as white a one; but then, again,
As cold, as that is glowing! Who will loose
The fetters it puts on? Or, who that wears them,
Would sigh for the embrace of liberty!
Truth! honour! all is lapsed. O, for a foe
To taunt me now!—O, for a flourish of
The Danish trump!

Ina. Saxon, wilt follow us?

Os. I come, sweet maid! What am I but your slave,
To follow, though I leave all else that's bright? [*They go out.*]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II

SCENE I.—*A wild tract of Country on the border of a Wood.*

Enter ELSWITH, in wretched attire, presently followed by
CONRAD.

Con. No farther!

Els. Yes!

Con. Alas, I can no more!

My lapsed strength constrains my limbs to play
The traitor to you!

Els. What! and thou fall off?

Well! I am left at last alone! Old man,
Think not that I'd upbraid thee. Thanks to thee
For what thou'st done; for what thou canst not do
No blame to thee, but pity for thee! More
I know my desolation is thy loss
Than mine! Back, prithee, to the hut we've left;
Thou hast strength enough to crawl there.

Con. What I have

I'll turn to worthier profit. [*Makes a violent effort, and*
snatches hold of her robe.] Oh! my loved,
My honour'd mistress! do not tempt these wilds,
Where hunger turns its aching eyes around
In vain!—Where prowls, perchance, the savage wolf!
Where—

Els. Peace!—Talk terror to the dead! Not less
Wouldst thou be heeded. I've a heart as dull,
Except one fear—one hope—to find my Alfred,
Or search for him in vain! There I'm alive!
There, only! Counsel should not come from thee,

Whose tongue persuaded what thy arm enforced,
 Desertion of my child! whose fate to avert,
 A mother's duty 'twas; or, else, to share!
 And now thou'dst urge desertion of his sire!
 I wonder not thy limbs are weak—thy heart
 Not in the cause! and yet it is a king's!
 But thou'rt his subject only; I'm his wife—
 So doubly bound to him. Back to the hut!
 They'll take compassion on thee! Fare thee well!

Con. Nay, pause in mercy! See who comes—alas!
 Should they be Danes!—Yon thicket will conceal us—
 For thy own safety!—Come!—Alas, the help
 I fain would give, I stand, myself, in need of! [*They retire.*]

Enter EDWY, ARTHUR, and other Saxons.

Edwy. We've rounded now the forest on the east,
 And, by the sun, our friends should meet us soon,
 Who gird the other side. A halt, awhile.

Arth. But should we miss the King—if still he lives
 Nor yet is captured, as 'tis rumour'd—He
 May pass our band unknown; by none of us
 Beheld, except at distance, when, of late,
 He marshal'd us, to lead us 'gainst the foe.

ELSWITH rushes forward.

Els. Seek ye your king?

Edwy. Who art thou?

Els. Friend, your leader,
 Until you find him!

Arth. She's distracted!

Edwy. Yes.

It can't be reason's light which shines so fierce
 In her unquiet eye, which misses naught,
 Yet rests on nothing!

Els. I command you, Sirs,
 On your allegiance follow me. Obey
 Your queen!

Arth. Our queen?

Edwy. Pshaw, Arthur, such a queen,
 As frenzy often makes! Come on!—Come on!
 Our friends will mock us, should they chance to reach
 The point agreed upon before us. [*EDWY and party go out.*]

Els. Stay!

Con. [*Appearing, and struggling to advance.*] Stay, country-
 men! It is indeed your queen.

Alas! they hear me not! My tongue hath wax'd
 As feeble as my limbs. [*Leans against a tree.*]

Els. Why, let them go!
 They are not half the band, that I have, here,
 In loyalty to my liege wedded lord!
 With that, I'll seek him, under Heaven's high guard!
 Yea, though I search the quarters of the foe!

In that find strength—find courage! That my food,
My rest! Farewell, old man! Heaven shelter thee!
And be thy mistress' guide. [Goes out.]

Con. Stay!—Hear me!—Stay!
I'll drag my limbs along, to follow thee. [Goes out.]

SCENE II.—*A Hut.*

ALFRED discovered trimming some arrows, with an unfinished bow beside him—MAUDE kneading flour for cakes.

Maude. [*Aside.*] Ay, there he's at his work! if work be that,
Which spareth toil. He'll trim a shaft, or shape
A bow with any archer in the land;
But neither can he plough, nor sow!—I doubt
If he can dig—I am sure he cannot reap—
He has hands and arms, but not the use of them!
Corin!

Alf. Your will?

Maude. Would thou couldst do my will
As readily as ask it! Go to the door;
And look if Edwin comes. Dost see him?

Alf. No.

Maude. Bad omen that! He'll bring an empty creel;
Else, were he home ere now. Put on more wood;
And lay the logs on end! You'll learn in time
To make a fire! Why, what a litter's there,
With trimming of your shafts that never hit!
'Ten days ago you kill'd a sorry buck;
Since when, your quiver you have emptied, thrice,
Nor ruffled hair nor feather.

Alf. If the game

Are scarce and shy, I cannot help it.

Maude. Out!

Your aim, I wot, is shy, your labour scant!
There's game enow, wouldst thou but hunt for them,
And when you find them, hit them! What expect'st
To-day, for dinner?

Alf. What Heaven sends!

Maude. Suppose
It sends us nought?

Alf. Its will be done!

Maude. You'd starve?

So would not I, knew I to bend a bow,
Or cast a line! See if thou hast the skill
To watch these cakes, the while they toast.

Alf. I'll do

My best.

Maude. Nor much to brag of, when all's done! [Goes out.]

Alf. [*solus*]. This is the lesson of dependence. Will
Thankless, that brings not profit; labour, spurn'd,

That sweats in vain; and patience, tax'd the more,
 The more it bears!—And taught unto a king—
 Taught by a peasant's wife, whom fate hath made
 Her sovereign's mistress. She little knows
 At whom she rails; yet is the roof her own;
 Nor does she play the housewife grudgingly.
 Give her her humour! So! How stands the account
 'Twixt me and fortune?—We are wholly quits!—
 She dress'd me—She has stripp'd me!—On a throne
 She placed me—She has struck me from my seat!
 Nor in the respect where sovereigns share alike
 With those they rule, was she less kind to me—
 Less cruel! High she fill'd for me the cup
 Of bliss connubial—She has emptied it!
 Parental love she set before me too,
 And bade me banquet; scarce I tasted, ere
 She snatch'd the feast away! My queen—My child!—
 Where are they? 'Neath the ashes of my castle!
 I sat upon their tomb one day—one night.
 Then, first, I felt the thralldom of despair!
 The despot, he! He would not let me weep!
 There were the fountains of my tears as dry
 As they had never flow'd! To bursting swell'd
 My heart; and yet no sigh would he let forth
 With vent to give it ease! There had I sat
 And died—But Heaven a stronger tyrant sent—
 Hunger, that wrench'd me from the other's grasp,
 And dragg'd me hither! This is not the lesson
 I set myself to con!

Re-enter MAUDE.

Maude. 'Tis noon, and yet
 No sign of Edwin! Dost thou mind thy task?
 Look to't! and when the cakes are fit to turn,
 Call, and I'll come!

Alf. I'll turn them, dame.

Maude. You will?
 You'll break them!—Know I not your handy ways?
 I would not suffer thee put finger to them!
 Call, when 'tis time. You'll turn the cakes, forsooth!
 As likely thou couldst make the cakes as turn them!

[*Goes out.*]

Alf. So much for poverty! Adversity's
 The nurse for kings;—but then the palace gates
 Are shut against her!—They would, else, have hearts
 Of mercy oft'ner—gems, not always, dropp'd
 In fortune's golden cup. What thought hath he
 How hunger warpeth honesty, whose meal
 Still waited on the hour? Can he perceive
 How nakedness converts the kindly milk
 Of nature into ice, to whom each change
 Of season—yea, each shifting of the wind,

presents his fitting suit? Knows he the storm
That makes the valiant quail, who hears it only
Through the safe wall, its voice alone can pierce;
And there talks comfort to him with the tongue,
That bids, without, the shelterless despair?
Perhaps he marks the mountain wave, and smiles
So high it rolls!—while on its fellow hangs
The fainting seaman glaring down at death
In the deep trough below! Let me extract
Riches from penury; from sufferings
Blessings; that if I e'er assume again
The sceptre, I may be the more a king
By being more a man!

MAUDE *re-enters, goes towards the fire, lifts the cakes, goes to*
ALFRED, and holds them to him.

Maude. Is this your care?
Ne'er did you dream that meal was made of corn?
Which is not grown until the earth be plough'd;
Which is not garner'd up until 'tis cut;
Which is not fit for use until 'tis ground;
Nor uséd then till kneaded into bread!
Ne'er knew you this? It seems you never did,
Else had you known the value of the bread;
Thought of the ploughman's toil, the reaper's sweat,
The miller's labour, and the housewife's thrift;
And not have left my barley cakes to burn
To very cinders!

Alf. I forgot, good dame!

Maude. Forgot, good dame!—Forgot! You ne'er forgot
To eat my barley cakes! [*Knock.*] Open the door!

MAUDE *sets the cakes on the table, where she had been kneading*
them; ALFRED opens the door.

Alf. An aged man!

Maude. Come in—[*Enter an Old Man.*] What want you?

Old Man. Food!

Maude. Want calls on want, when you look here for food!

Old Man. Good dame, to say I have not tasted food
Since morning yesterday, is not to speak
My need more urgent than it is.

Maude. Whate'er

Thy need, we cannot minister to it—
Seek richer quarters.

Alf. Stay! He's in the gripe
Of straitest want! There's food, and give it him!

Maude. What! when we've scanty stock for three days
more!

Alf. We breakfasted this morning; yesternight
We supp'd, and noon ere then had seen us dine.
Since yesternorn he has not touch'd a meal!
Whoe'er lacks food, 'tis now his turn to eat.

This portion would be mine—I'll go without!
 Here!—Here!—Good dame, the hand which gave us that
 Will not more sparing of its bounty be
 For using thus its gift! The hand that fed
 So many thousands with what only seem'd
 Provision for a few, can, also, make
 The remnant answer us for many a meal!

Old Man. O strong in faith!—In mercy rich! Whoc'er
 Thou art, that hand is with thee! Wast thou great,
 And art thou now brought low?—'twill make thy fall,
 Thy rise—thy want, abundance—thy endurings,
 Enjoyings—and thy desolation, troops
 Of friends and lovers, countless! Does the storm
 Hold on? Ne'er heed it! There's the sun behind,
 That, with effulgence, double, shall break through,
 And make thee cloudless day! [Goes out.]

Maude. A poor man's wish,
 They say, is better than a rich man's gift.
 If house and lands thou'st lost, I would not say
 But thou mayst get them back again; with roof
 Enlarged, and acres grown. Yet lands and house
 To come, are not so good as bread in hand,
 And that thou'st given away,—if Edwin speeds
 No better than he did yesterday!

Alf. Ne'er fear—
 These arrows when I've trimm'd, and strung this bow,
 I'll find thee out a garner in these wilds
 To dress the table still!

Maude. I'd rather trust
 A peck of barley meal to furnish it!

Edwin [without]. What, ho! within!

Maude. 'Tis Edwin's voice!

Edwin [without]. Within!

Open the door!

Maude. Thank Providence, his hands
 Have something else to do! [Opens the door.]

Edwin. [Entering with a sack.] Provision, wife!
 A month's subsistence! Take it in, and ply
 Thy housewifery; for friends must eat of it—
 Guests, sure of welcome, who supply the board
 They ask their hosts to spread—a gallant troop
 Of countrymen, for common safety link'd,
 And wand'ring through the land, with hopes, they say,
 To learn some tidings of their king; and if
 They find him, list themselves beneath his banner,
 And face the Dane again. [MAUDE goes out.]

Alf. [Aside.] The land's not lost
 That's left a son to struggle for't! The king
 That's firmly seated in his people's hearts—
 His proper throne—although supplanted, reigns.

Edwin. [Going to the door.] In! in!

Enter EGBERT, KENRICK, ARTHUR, EDWY, OSWALD, and others, variously armed.

Eg. Thanks, friend!

Edwin. No thanks, good sirs, to me,
You're guests the frugal'st host might entertain,
Who cater for yourselves. Sit down! The board
Shall soon be cover'd.

Eg. And we bring a cup
To cheer it with, with richer beverage
Than what the fountain yields, replenish'd. Bring
A flagon, worthy host—

Ken. [*Aside to ARTHUR.*] Commend him to
A cover'd board and brimming cup! He's fit
To play the leader there;—but he's no head
For men like us, that rise betimes from meat,
And wish for busy hands! I'm weary on't!

Arth. [*Aside to KENRICK.*] And so am I! and, trust me, of
our minds

Are many more!

Ken. To lead a life of shifts
That we may dine in safety! I'll no more on't!
Give me a skirmish!

Arth. Tell him so!

Ken. I will,

Ere I touch food, again!

[*Returns with ARTHUR.*]

Eg. [*To ALFRED.*] Is it a bow
You shape?

Alf. It is.

Eg. I pray you show it me.

[*Beckoning ALFRED.*]

Alf. [*Rising and coming forward.*] Here.

Eg. [*Struck with the appearance of ALFRED.*] I did wrong to
call you from your seat.

Alf. No wrong is done where none is meant.

Eg. You make

The trespass greater, so excusing it!

Lodge you beneath this roof?

Alf. I do.

Eg. [*Aside.*] I've met

With men whose air and faces almost told
Their histories, that I could say, "Now this
Was such, or such, a man—such course of life,
Or such, pursued—this kind of acts, or that,
Perform'd." His dress, alone, bespeaks the peasant.
Change it for e'en the richest, he would seem
Far more, indeed, at home!

Alf. You'd see the bow?

Eg. [*Mechanically taking, and almost at the same time re-
turning it.*] Your pardon! I forgot! I humbly
thank you!

[*ALFRED returns to his seat.*]

Enter MAUDE, with cakes, which she lays on the table, while one of EGBERT'S party enters with a flagon, and sets it down.

Maude. This bread will serve till more is ready, friends.

[Goes out.]

Eg. Sit down.

Ken. Sit down who will, I'll not sit down!

Arth. Nor I!

Osw. Nor I!

Eg. Why? what's amiss?

Ken. We loathe

To lead this wary life. The very deed
Confess the covert irksome, and at times
Betake them to the plain.

Eg. Not when they hear

The hunters are abroad! Sit down! Sit down!

Ken. We'll not sit down, till 'tis determined who
Shall head the table!

Eg. I shall head it!

Ken. Ay?

Edwy. And wherefore should he not?

Ken. Go to! Go to!

You question far too bold for one so young.

Edwy. I question in the right, and so am bold
Far less than thou, that question'st in the wrong!

Ken. The wrong?—Thou'rt but a boy!

Edwy. The boy that proves

Himself a man, does all a man can do.

Ken. Beware thou dost not prove thyself on me,
My metal's temper'd—thine, at best, but raw!

Before thy chin exchanged its coat of down
For one of manlier fashion, I had shown
A beard in twenty fields!

Eg. No more of this!

The post by lot is mine. I got it not
Of mine own choice; nor, yet, by partial leave.

It fell to me. It might have fallen to you,
To him, or him—to any one—and then—

No matter! If, by fearing to be rash,
And overshoot the mark, my shaft hath lit

O'er-short on't, I am content a better bow
Should lead the game.

Edwy. It shall not be! We'll have
No other leader! Sides, Sirs, sides!

Ken. Come on!

When they've such stomach for't, 'twere strange if we
Lack'd appetite. Come on!

Alf. *[Rushing in between them as they are on the point of encountering.]* Hold!—Stop!—Which side's

The Dane? I stand for England! Can it be?

You're Saxons all! What! Are your foes so few

You make ones of each other? Fie, Sirs! Fie!

Arth. [To KENRICK.] Who's he?

Ken. I know not.

Alf. [To KENRICK.] You're a soldier?

Ken. Yes.

Alf. Whose sword is that you draw?

Ken. My own.

Alf. Your country's!

You took it, with an oath to use it 'gainst
Her foes, and do you turn it on her sons?
For shame!

Arth. Why bear you his rebuke?

Alf. [To ARTHUR.] And you?

Arth. A soldier too!

Alf. [To OSWALD.] And you?

Osw. The same!

Alf. Beneath whose banner shot you arrow last?

Arth. and *Osw.* The king's.

Alf. And take you aim at the king's liege?

As well the king himself! What! do you stand

With graspéd weapons still? Or do you look

For signal here?—Old soldier, why is this?

Is't thus you use your battle-temper'd sword?

Is that the rust of Danish blood upon't?

These hacks—are they the thrusts of Danish blades?

Ne'er hath it met the foe that master'd it?

Ne'er hath it fail'd the friend that call'd upon it?

Still did it guard thy country while it could?

Yet would it back thy king, did he command?

And wouldst thou tarnish it? [KENRICK hangs his head.

The field, the field,

You drew it last in?—Ha!—You start at that!

Remember you who won that field? You do!

His shout is in thine ear again! Thine eye

Beholds him scattering carnage through the ranks

Of those that fled!—The Saxon then was down!—

What! tighten you your grasp, till, with the strain,

Your weapon trembles? Keep it for the Dane,

And put it, stainless, up!

[KENRICK sheathes his sword—ARTHUR and OSWALD
unbend their bows—The rest follow the example.

Eg. [Aside.] What man is this,

That lacks all sign and title of command,

Yet all obey?

Edwy. We're friends again?

Ken. Content!

Eg. A cup, then, to our making up.—Sit down.—

A pledge for concord, friends—The king!

[Drinks.]

All. The king!

[Drinking successively.]

Eg. I pray you, Edwy, sing those rhymes for us,

You've strung so well, and we so love to hear.

Edwy. Right willingly. Though homely be the verse,

I dare be sworn was ne'er more rich in heart.

[Sings.]

When, circling round the festive board,
 The cup is fill'd the highest;
 And one and all their love record
 For him their thought's the nighest;
 Who owns the name their lips pronounce,
 While vouching tear-drops spring, Sirs,
 In eyes he does not see? At once
 I'll tell you—Here's "The King," Sirs!

When, proud in arms, the nation stood,
 To front the foul invader;
 And England did what England could,
 And fate alone betray'd her;
 Who was the foremost to advance,
 The first a spear to fling, Sirs,
 The last to quit the field? At once
 I'll tell you—Here's "The King," Sirs!

And, now, when, o'er the prostrate land,
 The spoiler roams resistless;
 And Vengeance fears to lift her brand,
 And Hope almost is listless;
 Whence does the beam of solace glance,
 The song of heart'ning ring, Sirs,
 And promise freedom yet? At once
 I'll tell you—Here's "The King," Sirs!

Eg. Well sung.

Edwy. What's well intended, scarce comes short
 Howe'er performance halts—I did my best.

Alf. My heart o'erflows!—I shall betray myself!
 What could my palace boast to vie with this?
 Not for its carved roof would I now exchange
 These rafters, 'neath whose shelter—vanquish'd, stripp'd
 Of crown and sceptre—I am still a king—
 My people's hearts my throne!

Eg. What trumpet's that?

Arth. [Going to the door.] I'll see.

Ken. I know.

Eg. Whose is it?

Ken. 'Tis the Dane's!

I know his flourish well! Let's out, and meet him!
 Is't not the Dane?

Arth. It is! They're close upon us!—

A quick retreat!—Their numbers double ours!

[All start up except ALFRED.]

Alf. No more?

Arth. No more!—What can we, one to two?

[ALFRED rises, looks sternly at him for a moment, and
 goes out hastily, in an opposite direction.]

Eg. Why goes he?

Arth. For his safety to provide.

Let us provide for ours by instant flight.

Ken. He's not the man to fly! My life upon it,
He'll never turn his back upon the foe!—
I told you so! [*ALFRED returns, armed with sword and target.*]

Alf. What distance off's the Dane?

Arth. Scarce half a mile by this!

Alf. [*To himself.*] The wood's to pass.
Unseen we can approach, and set upon them,
All unprepared for us. Divide your band!

[*They mechanically obey him, alternately looking at each other and at ALFRED, with an expression of wonder and inquiry.*]

Half with your leader go; and half with me!

[*EGBERT mechanically heads one of the divisions.*]
Ours be it to charge! They're sure to waver. Then
Our shouting your signal be to second us!

My bounding heart presages victory!

And so I see does yours, old soldier. [*To KENRICK.*] Come,
There be our first trust; and our second here!

Say, would you back your king?—Follow your king!

[*ALFRED and EGBERT go out, the rest enthusiastically following.*]

SCENE III.—*The Country, interspersed with Wood.*

Enter ODDUNE, EDGAR, Chiefs, and Soldiers.—EDGAR *bearing the standard of the Ræfen.*

Od. Halt, comrades! Here we'll take our noon's repast.
This velvet sward will be our pleasant couch,
To rest us from our toil. And lose not heart!
We'll find our Alfred yet! What, though our search
Has hitherto proved vain? When look'd for least,
Perchance we'll light upon him. Fortune's smiles,
Like fortune's frowns, when once they come, come thick!
Our expedition fairly has begun,
Fairly proceeded, and will fairly end!

Edg. Know you these parts?

Od. Right well. You stand in Mercia;
Where, as that aged lonely man surmised,
A monarch's head beneath a peasant's roof
Contented shelters. [*Shout.*] Hark! the cry of onset!
From thence it comes! Guard you the spoil! The rest,
That choose it, follow me!

[*ODDUNE and Saxons go out—EDGAR and Saxons remain.*]

Edg. Hie after them,

And bring me word what's passing. If the Dane,

[*Soldier goes out.*]

My life upon't, again he bites the dust!

[*Shouts.*]

Another shout! The contest's close at hand!

I hear the clashing of their weapons,—Well?

[*Soldier re-enters.*]

Soldier. The Dane is overthrown! Our countrymen
Alone achieved the victory! He fled,
Ere full we came in sight. Some man of note
Is added to our band, for soon as met
Our mighty chief embraced him!

*Enter ODDUNE, ALFRED, EGBERT, and Party, with ODDUNE's
following.*

Od. Countrymen,
Behold your king!

Alf. Rise! rise! my gallant friends.
We're brothers struggling in one common cause,
And by Heaven's high appointment haply met!

Od. Haply indeed! Thus at your feet I lay
The standard of the Dane!

*[Takes the Danish standard from EDGAR and lays it
at ALFRED's feet.]*

Alf. What! more success!

My faithful Earl! what chance has brought thee hither?
Whence comest thou?

Od. From my castle, which the Danes
Beset, commanded by the brother chiefs
Hinguar and Hubba, by whose sister's skill
Was wrought that standard, call'd their fatal Rafen;
Whose ominous device, they idly feign'd,
Upon the eve of victory would flap
Its magic-woven wings. It seem'd, indeed,
As if death rode upon them, marking us,
His prey; for famine plied us worse within,
Than e'en the foe without. But 'twas a friend,
Severe, to do us good! Despairing succour,
And all munition gone, at night we made
A sally, all resolved to cut our way
Through the enemy, or perish sword in hand!
The Dane was unprepared—before our march
Startled his ear, our swords were at his breast!
My liege, you may believe, the weapons, which
Despair first drew, were wielded now by Hope;
Escape was certain; but would he escape
Whom danger woo'd with chance of victory?
We fought for it; and won it!

Alf. Fair exploit!

Od. Of fairer yet, the news of our success,
My liege, gives hope. Such numbers throng'd to us
Upon our march, the handful, that I thought
To greet you with, has swell'd into a host—
Brave volunteers, whose pay's the leave to serve!
My liege, your queen and son?

Alf. Oddune, forbear!

The Dane has buried them—They sleep beneath
The ruins of thy master's castle, in
The flames of which they perish'd, Oddune! From

A dying follower I learn'd it! Learn'd,
That treason led the accursed assailants on!
If lips that speak for the last time, speak truth,
Edric has proved a traitor! Queen and child,
Except my country, Oddune, I have none—
That, now, is Alfred's all!—His all, for which
Alone he cares to live! Now, could we learn
The state and numbers of the enemy,
A blow might soon be struck—Oddune!—

Od. My liege.

Alf. [*To himself.*] No—that were doubtful—Oddune.

Od. Well, my liege?

Alf. [*To himself.*] And so were that!

Od. My liege, you spoke just now.

Alf. Anon, my Oddune! Make the attempt myself?

Yes! Life and empire on this cast I'll stake!

But how provide myself? There is a place
In the glen, where, of its shaggy vesture scant,
Its sides stand bare, and their huge ribs expose
Of solid rock; so giddy steep withal,
That down direct from the precipitous verge
You many fathoms look.—There have I mark'd
A lonely wight at the bottom couch'd, with harp
Playing to the idle echoes by the hour,
Admiring how they mock'd him—I will use
That harp!—will use it to expel the foe,
That thrust its master from the shining hall
To the dim cavern-cell; spill'd his heap'd dish—
O'erturn'd his cup, from all sides running o'er,
And cast him, with that golden song of his,
To roots and water,—Edwy, speak with me!
Wilt be awhile companion to thy king,
Though to share danger with him?

Edwy. To share death.

Alf. Your hand! My friends, our country must be free!
My trusty Oddune, wonder not, although
You've found your king, to lose him for a time.
This list of trusty chiefs, with whom, through means
I need not name to thee, I have kept up
Intelligence, will show thee whom to warn
Of thy success. Summon them to repair
To Selwood forest, there to meet their king.
There shall we meet again, my gallant friends!
Your hands, my chiefs! Soldiers, our hearts embrace!
Farewell! Be strong in hope! The land's not lost
That's left a son resolved to do her right;
And here are troops of sons, and loyal ones!
Confirm the stirring spirit of the time
Till it o'erspread the realm; the which, throughout,
With swiftest expedition bear the call
That to her rescue rouses those that love her!
Strong in her children should a mother be

Shall ours be helpless that has sons like us?
 God save our native land, whoever pays
 The ransom that redeems her!—though the king!
 There king and subject side by side shall stand!
 Stand by your king, your king will stand by you!
 [ALFRED and EDWY go out. ODDUNE and the others
 severally.]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The inside of Guthrum's Tent.*

Enter GUTHRUM and EDRIC.

Guth. I swear a royal booty! Thou hast done
 Great service to th' Dane. With these supplies
 No need to forage! Here we'll sit at ease,
 And rest us from the war.

Edr. No rest for me!
 Far richer holds than those which I surprised
 And plunder'd, at my master's feet shall lay
 Their treasure and munition.

Guth. At thy friend's!
 Call me not master! Call me father! Think
 To thy first expedition what we owe!—
 The capture of the royal Saxon's son,
 The heir of Alfred!

Edr. Would his queen, as well,
 Were now within thy power!—But she escaped,
 Or perish'd in the flames.

Guth. Come, Edric!—speak;
 What shall I give thee to reward the love,
 That so hath labour'd to enrich me? Come,
 Ask what thou wilt, by Odin it is thine.

Edr. Thou badest me call thee father. With the leave
 Give me the right to hail thee by that title.
 I ask thy daughter's hand.

Guth. I give it thee.
 Seek her, and bring her hither.

Edr. For that boon
 Command my blood! Ay, every drop of it. [Goes out.]

Enter HALDANE.

Hal. My Lord, a Saxon minstrel is without:
 The string he touches with a master's hand;
 And as he plays, a youth that waits upon him,
 Sings to his harp rare tales of love and war
 As ever gladden'd ear!

Guth. Conduct him hither.

[*HALDANE goes out, and returns with ALFRED, followed by EDWY. GUTHRUM, who had sat down, struck by the deportment of ALFRED, rises.*

Guth. Ha! who art thou? What art thou?

Alf. I'm the bard.

The son of fantasy,

Whose world's o' the air—to mortal vision else

Impalpable—a paragon to this!—

Where he communes with forms, whose radiancy

Outshines the lustre of earth's fairest things!

Whose title, from above, earth can't confer

Or take away! whose smile is coveted

By beauty—valour—their bright mirror, where

They see themselves more bright! whose tributaries

Are kings themselves; whose gorgeous state but serves

To swell his strain, that doth emblazon them

Beyond their deeds or titles!

Guth. Well replied;

I like thy answer better, that 'tis bold!

Sit down, sit down.—A sample of your skill.—

Thou spokest of beauty now,—What canst thou say

In praise of it?

Alf. [*To himself.*] Thanks to the tender hand

That guided me to con the minstrel's lore,

And treasure't in my heart!

Guth. Let's taste thy skill.

ALFRED.

Wouldst thou know what beauty is?

Beauty is the queen of sighs!

Not a heart but owneth this,

Proud or humble, light or wise.

Crown'd goblets some desire;

Some to see the banquet spread;

Some prize shining gold; and higher

Value some the shining deed;

Safety's deem'd a gem by some;

Danger, some a jewel call;

Some to power desire to come;

But beauty is the prized of all!

Well the Bard her praise may sing—

Of his soul-entrancing lyre,

She commands the master-string,

That which lends it all its fire!

Wanting which he could not sing—

Rhymeless, numberless, might be,

Nor e'er had won a name for deathless minstrelsy.

Guth. Right well thou provest thy title to thy name.

What does the youth that waits upon thee?

Alf. Sing,

The while I play.

Guth. We'll hear him at the banquet.
 Thou art not old—and, yet, thou look'st not young;
 Thy brow with wisdom graver than with years—
 I'd talk with you; for great, unless I err,
 Your skill in lore, we little care to search
 Whose school's the battle-field. Attend me! Come.
 [Exeunt.]

SCENE II.—*A sequestered rural spot near the Camp.*

Enter INA (leading ETHELRED), EDITH, and Boy.

Edith. Your little charge is a fair healthful plant,
 Whose thriving looks bespeak your careful tending.
 How strong is infancy in its helplessness!
 Of all that dwelt within the hold where he
 Was found, no soul, they say, was spared but him,
 Howe'er they pray'd for mercy!

Ina. Little praise
 To him that saved him! Edric's treacherous heart
 Can own no touch of mercy! Know you not
 The boy is Alfred's son? His hold it was,
 Which Edric with my father's host beset,
 When found the chief this boy. Go on before,
 We'll follow you; and mind you spare no pains
 To humour him. [To Boy, who goes out with ETHELRED.
 I should not love thee, boy:
 Thy race is Ina's bane!

Edith. Why say'st thou so?
 The Saxon loves thee, Ina.

Ina. Loves me?

Edith. Yes!

What, though his passion is not on his tongue;
 His heart is full of it. It speaks in sighs—
 Love's proper words. Ne'er plainer spoke to ear!

Ina. Nay, tell me not. His heart is stone to me!
 He sighs! but 'tis for freedom!

Edith. 'Tis for you!
 How love is blind to what it pines to see!
 You think him stone; belike so thinks he you.
 Couldst see thyself, thou wouldst at once see him!
 Your eyes, at parting, that strain after him,
 At meeting, feast on any other thing;
 Your tongue, that, when he hears not, rings with him,
 In his hearing's noteless, as it ne'er knew sound.
 For too strong love, his love's accounted none.

Ina. I tell thee, no! His thoughts abide not here.
 They're with his countrymen, some daughter fair
 Of whom he loves—not Ina.—Be it so!
 The cheek I love shall smile, though not on me!
 The bird, I'd keep with me I will let go,

And free from bondage that would kill with doating.
He's free—My father gives him liberty.

Edith. And what for thee?

Ina. To die, like a poor flower
That lives with only gazing on the sun;
But from her radiant lord too long shut out
By the cold cloud, in silence hangs her head,
And dies a smiling death!

Edith. He comes.

Ina. Alas,
For the last time!

OSWITH enters, perceiving INA.

Os. Still, still, my treacherous steps
Betray me, leading me to what I'd shun;
Yet what is ever present to my thought
Why fears my eye to see? My thralldom's full—
If 'tis enchantment, better to enjoy
The fatal sweetness of the powerful spell
I strive in vain to break!

Ina. Saxon, thou'rt free.

Os. Recall thy words!

Ina. I speak my father's will.

Os. Why does he give me liberty?

Ina. Because

His *Ina* begg'd the boon.

Os. Why did she so?

Would she had begg'd my death! I did not ask
For freedom;—thralldom was more kind to me,
Which chain'd me unto that I ought to fly,
But fain would cling to! Honour did not swerve
That was constrain'd to look upon its bane;
And if it look'd till it forgot itself,
'Twas its mischance—not crime.—Now, if it falls,
It falls of its own will! O maid, too fair!
Help me to 'scape the ruin thou hast wrought!
Think—think—'tis an apostate kneels to thee!
Instruct thy melting eye to flash with scorn—
Teach thy sweet tongue harsh indignation's note—
Erect thy form with dread severity—
Till, like a seraph, sterner in thy frown
For what thou look'st and breath'st of beauteous heaven,
Thou awest me into virtue!

Ina. Wouldst thou be free,
Thou art so!

Os. Am I? Lady, there are bonds,
The wearing which endears them to the slave,
So that he hugs them—would not be set free!
Free me from these!

Ina. What bonds?

Os. E'en such, as not
Our limbs imprison, but the things that rule them—

Our thoughts and wills—as coil about our hearts,
And keep their hold, when links of steel were wax.

Ina. Methinks I have a guess what bonds you mean!
Are they not heavy ones when worn, alone,
But light when others share them? Is it so?
Hadst thou such partnership, wouldst thou be free?
I would not, so had I!

Os. It cannot be!
Half she reveals her heart, and veils her eyes.
Do her veil'd eyes unveil the other half?
Am I so bless'd, so cursed, as to be loved?
Nay, then, 'tis fate I'd cope with, and must yield!
Oh, to have fallen in battle!—to have fallen
When honour was my mistress!—to have fallen
When in her radiant eye I drew my sword,
And deem'd my life a stake not worth a thought
To venture for her smile!—when wooing her,
I strode more blithely through the battle-field,
Than e'er I bounded down the festive hall!

Ina. What makes thee wish for death?

Os. The dread to lose
What was my more than life; but now seems poor—
Like to be cast away, since I have found
A good I covet more than life and it!

Ina. What dost thou covet so?

Os. Thee, lady, thee!
Thou art that good of value paramount!
Oh, to have met thee with a heart at large!
No solemn debt—no knotted tie upon it!
Free to be all thy own—to render thee
Its whole of love, hope, honour, loyalty—
One large, unbroken, everlasting gift—
The hand which now, in doubtful joy, I take—
How had I caught in tranced ecstasy,
And kneeling, laid the offering at thy feet!

Enter EDRIC.

Edr. Let go that hand! 'Tis mine!

Os. What fire is this,
That like the lightning darts through me, and feels
As all-consuming!—Thine!

Ina. Believe him not.

Os. With, believe him not—believe the maid
That all forgets herself with thought of thee,
Casts off the bashful 'tire of virginhood,
And, unenforced, confesses she's thine own!—
The eyes turns on thee she would still avert,
And lets thee see them, though they stream with love!—
Calls on thee with the tongue that ne'er till now
Betray'd her secret, to receive't for thine!
Believe him not, he sports with thee!—Thy heart
Is not more surely seated in thy breast,

Than is thy image lodged in Ina's heart—
 Not more the spring of life to thee, than that
 Is life itself to Ina! 'Fore the world
 Will I proclaim me thine, and cleave to thee!
 But plight me faith for faith.

Os. I do, sweet maid!

Edr. [*Drawing his sword.*] My right's a bar, which thou
 must first remove!

Os. Thy right! What right? [*Half drawing his sword.*

Ina. Give me the hand that grasps the sword, and grasp
 My hand, instead! Thou'rt mine! Thy hand—thy arm—
 Thy all are mine! My all I have given for thee!
 Paid down for thee a virgin's heart, that ne'er
 Before in love was barter'd. Give me thy hand!
 Or thou'rt the falsest, most forsworn of men,
 Breaking the vow that scarce hath left thy lips;
 And I'm the poorest, most abused of maids!
 Give me thy hand! Nay, an thou wilt not, thus
 Upon thy arm I'll hang, and be thy shield,
 Taking the blows upon my fearless breast,
 That threaten wound to thine.

Os. [*Taking his hand from his sword.*] Thy right? What
 right?

Edr. Dost wish to learn? Such as the bridegroom claims—
 As makes the lover bless his stars, and gives
 Fulfilment of his long-enduring hopes—
 As turns his blissful dreams to substances,
 So rich, past credence, still he thinks he dreams—
 Asks if he wakes—believes it—doubts it—sickens
 Lest day prove night, and truthful morning come,
 And in his very arms his treasures fade!

Os. [*Half drawing his sword again.*] A bridegroom's right!

Ina. That right is thine alone!
 O how thy frame with fearful passion shakes!
 While thy full orbs strain on thy countryman,
 With deadly purpose fraught! Turn them on me!
 Read who is Ina's bridegroom in her face!
 See whom her eyes with fondness strain upon,
 As thine on him with hate! O what a fee
 Thou mak'st me pay for that which costs thee nought!
 I call thee lord—If that contents thee not,
 Why then the dearer name of husband take,
 And give me in exchange, an only look!

Os. [*To EDRIC.*] Explain thy words.

Edr. The service I have done
 The Dane, he bids me name requital for;
 And by his God he binds himself, whate'er
 The boon, to grant it. Ina was the boon.

[*OSWITH draws his sword.*

Ina. List to me, Oswith—Oswith—by thy love!—
 My father's oath has made me his! Hear mine!
 By Odin, I'll be bride to none but thee!

Edr. Force will exact what frowardness denies!

Os. And thou couldst wed the bride that loathed thee?

Edr. Yes.

Os. Put up thy sword. I'd whisper thee. [*They whisper.*]

Ina. Say it out.

Thy breath is mine! More than her own it feeds

Thy Ina's life! O, 'tis a treacherous breath,

To play the traitor to its mistress thus!

Speak out, I say! Thou heed'st me not! False friend!

Friend cruel and unfair, that gives me nought,

Whilst I give all to him!

Edr. 'Tis well.

[*Goes out.*]

Ina. 'Tis ill!

Not half so plain thy gleaming brandish'd sword

Could threaten death, as doth thy flashing eye!

Os. Ina, thy fears are causeless. Prithee hence,

Back to the camp; whilst I revolve the means

Shall bring the course of our now thwarted loves

To prosperous issue.

Ina. I'll revolve them with thee;

And thou shalt find how thrifty woman's wit,

When set to work by love!

Os. My Ina!—Love!

Bride!—Wife!—for wedded they whom love has join'd—

I'd be alone.

Ina. I will not leave thee! Come!

We'll go to the camp together.

Os. Sweet! my way

Lies this way.

Ina. So does mine, then.

Os. Nay, farewell!

Ina. You leave me not! I'll cling to thee till death

Disjoins us! Drag me if thou wilt, I'll ne'er

Let go my hold! Oh was there ever maid

So lost for love! that knelt—that bent the knee—

Pleaded her cause with her bold tongue—paid tribute,

Large as her eyes could furnish, of her tears

To an unheeding lover, deaf to her,

And scarce confess'd an hour!

Re-enter EDRIC.

Edr. Was it for this

Thou sent'st me hence? to give thee pause for dalliance!

Traitor!

Os. Ha!

Edr. Coward! [*Both draw.*]

Enter GUTHRUM and ALFRED.

Guth. Hold! forbear! Who stirs,

There's not another step 'twixt him and death!

How is this?—I deem'd you friends!—Your cause of quarrel?

Ina, my child! what share hast thou in't? What!

Dost turn from me? [*Angrily.*]

Ina. My father!

Guth. There! there! there! [*Pressing her to him.*
Did I speak roughly to thee? Silly fawn,
Startled at but a sound! Art thou in tears?
It does concern thee, then?—How?—*Ina*, speak!
Dost hear me? Answer, girl! Well; never heed.
You would if you could! No matter! Noble *Edric*,
Declare the cause of quarrel to thy friend.

Ina. Thou'rt not his friend! Call not thyself his friend!

Guth. My *Ina*, but I must! and so must thou—

Ina. Never!

Guth. What's that!—My child, beware! You know
I brook not thwarting!—must not be gainsaid!
Call him thy friend! Come! Show me thou'rt my child!
My flesh! my blood! that owe themselves to me,
And should be subject to me! Wilt not speak?
Take counsel! Something's rising in my heart
That bodes not good to thee! Once more I say,
Resist me not! Submit! Call him thy friend.
Art silent still? Now, minstrel, prove thou'rt wise!
I found thee so when we discoursed of peace!
Of war!—the duties subjects owe to kings,
And kings to subjects. Now propound the means
Behoves a father take, who would untie
A wilful daughter's tongue!

Alf. Force but subdues

The weak; but, with the strong, 'tis met by force.
Was never found the noble nature yet
That crouch'd before a frown! 'Tis sway'd with smiles.
Chiding her nature thou but chid'st thy own!
She's thy soul's bright and fair reflecting glass!
But look at her! Sits not thy upper lip—
All manly as it is, and bold, to hers—
More proudly firm upon thy nether one,
Than hers upon its fellow! Vauntest thou,
As only late thou didst, rebuke with thee,
Given as rebuke, ne'er mended failing yet?
Then is thy boast her pardon! Give me favour
For speaking thus my thought.

Guth. Thou dost my wish.

I like thy frankness! Yes; I see! You're right!
She's all her father's child! Come to me, *Ina*!
[*She rushes into his arms.*

What wouldst thou do for me?

Ina. Aught that I could.

Guth. Ah, there my *Ina* speaks! I like thee thus!
Thus *Ina*, when thou hang'st upon my neck;
And gazest in my face! My *Ina*, list!
I'll tell thee wherefore I would have thee call
The Saxon friend. I've sworn to give thee to him.

Ina. Without my heart? What, father, give my hand
Without my heart? Not so wouldst thou give thine,

And make a league of friendship with thy hand
 Thy heart protested 'gainst! And what were that,
 Compared to one of love?—a league of friendship,
 That barr'd a friend out, and enclosed a foe!
 Wouldst thou do that? Thou wouldst not give a smile
 Without thy soul's consent. And wouldst thou have
 Thy Ina give her hand without her heart?

Guth. Dread Odin has my oath!

Ina. So has he mine!

Guth. What hast thou sworn?

Ina. Eternal truth to love!

Guth. Thou dost not know the passion? But thou dost!
 'Tis clear! I see too sure thou art its thrall!

Upon thy cheek his crimson pennon waves!
 Thy downcast eyes pay homage to his sway!
 Thy heaving breast by its commotion shows
 The conqueror is within! I see his power
 Confess'd in every fibre of thy frame!
 Whom dost thou love? Who has lit up this flame?

Ina. [*Kneeling.*] Thou, father, thou; whose fondness for
 thy child

Would sketch for her the man thou'dst have her wed;
 How he should be among his peers in rank—
 And that the first—without a peer in worth!
 Most brave!—most true!—most generous!—most good!
 Fit to be challenger of all the noble field,
 In all achievements of supreme renown;
 And bear the palm from all! Nor yet to lack
 Those qualities of visage, and of form,
 Which to these other richer graces join'd,
 Make the consummate man! But that I saw
 My father such a man, I should have deem'd
 A phantom 'twas he drew for me; for ne'er,
 Except in him, saw I embodied wealth
 Of so rare worth—until I saw it there! [*Pointing to OSWIRN.*]

Guth. What's this to me?

Ina. The being of thy child—

Thy Ina!—thy dear Ina!—who forgets
 Her father 'tis she's kneeling to, as though
 He were a stranger to her; but, now, leaps
 Into his bosom! Oh, I'd like to see
 The harm could reach me here!

Guth. The Saxon dies!

Ina. No! no!

Guth. He spurn'd the proffer of his life,
 When forfeit to the God!

Ina. Nay hear me!

Guth. Spurn'd

My friendship! Guthrum's friendship!

Ina. No!

Guth. He did!

I loved him, though my foe, because I mark'd

His prowess in the fight ! I could have thought
 The God himself had turn'd against his sons,
 And, angry, sided with their enemies !
 He was my captive ! He had bled to Odin !
 I proffer'd him my friendship, would he make
 Alliance with the Dane, to snatch him from
 The altar ; and he spurn'd me ! Ay ! refused
 The hand of a victorious king, through faith
 To an uncrown'd fugitive ! He did !
 I spared him at my child's beseeching ! He
 That spurn'd the parent, now would win the child !
 He dies !

Alf. [*Aside to GUTHRUM.*] Thy Ina dies ! See, how she
 hangs,
 Half dead, already on thy shoulder ! Much
 Thou lov'st her ! If none other calls thee father,
 Beware thou art not childless !

Guth. Am I in the wrong ?
 Demand I more than is a father's due ?
 What is her life, but portion of my breath ?

Alf. A portion thou'dst give all thy breath to save !

Guth. Thou sayest right.

Alf. A portion, too, which she
 Would render up, not only to save thine,
 But let thee breathe with ease !

Guth. Thou sayest right ;
 Yet bows she not her fancy to my will
Alf. She cannot.

Guth. How ?

Alf. You ask ; and you have loved !

Guth. How know you that ?

Alf. Who has not felt the flame ?
 Your passion was repaid.

Guth. How know you that ?

Alf. How know I that ? From nought but mutual love
 A flower, consummate rich like that, could grow,
 Where fairest things that harmonize unite !
 E'en such a skin should such a mould incase,
 To such a heart, be casket such a mould ;
 Such lineaments compose the beauteous face,
 Of such a neck that makes its graceful seat !
 And skin, and mould, and heart, and face be served
 By such a minstrel as that tuneful tongue !
 This speaks the mingling of accordant hearts,
 Throbbing in fervent unity ; that one
 No thought, no wish, no hope, no joy can lodge,
 But finds its fellow at the other's core !

Guth. Minstrel, thou'rt right ! Deep does thy wisdom search !
 Her mother, Eva, was my only love,
 As I was hers ! Though daughter of my foe,
 She left her father, friends, land, faith, and all,
 To follow me. She did !—She did !

Alf. And that's
Her child, in whom, the passion that bless'd thee,
Thou'dst turn into a curse!

Guth. I like not that!
Thou makest too bold to say I'd curse my child!

Alf. Look at her!

Guth. Thou art right! Say on! Say on!
Yet where's the profit? Win me Odin's ear,
And move the God to give me back my oath!
Thou but perplexest me! Since thou'rt so wise,
Show me the way not to forswear myself;
And yet not keep my oath!

Alf. Two oaths the God
Has register'd; one only can be kept.
Which he accepts, the God himself decide.
You say he rules the sword; then to the sword
Entrust the cause, and these the terms of strife—
Who masters first his adversary's sword
And yet not sheds his blood, be his the maid!

Os. Content!

Edr. Content!

Ina. Oswith, this chain's of gold,

[Still leaning on her father.

That never knew alloy—cunningly wrought—
An amulet, that ever faithful guards
The wearer's wishes. Hang it round thy neck,
Thy Ina's fate goes with it! Proves it false,
Drop it into the grave where I shall lie,
Ere, by its treachery, thy rival thrives!

Guth. And Edric, thou receive this ring from me.
The hand that wears it, holds its weapon true,
If faithful to the Dane, as thou to me!

Alf. I have a ring, a charmed bauble too.
Power to the hand it graces, does it give,
O'er falsehood to prevail. 'Tis his who'll take it—
But who would wear it, and its virtue prove,
Must first affirm he owns a loyal heart—
True to the king that first his homage claim'd,
The land that gave him birth—Wilt take it, thou?

[To EDRIC.

Edr. The ring I'll trust is this I now put on,
The guard of my good sword!

Alf. Wilt take it thou?

[To OSWITH.

Os. Though to the king I'm true
That first my homage claim'd—true to the land
That gave me birth! yet more, than true to these,
The thrall of love, I dare not take the ring!

Alf. Show me thy hand—my countryman!—'Tis
'Tis a true hand—for ne'er would fit the ring
Disloyal finger yet. Look at it well!
Lo! speak I not the truth?

Os. *[Recognising ALFRED.]* My liege!

Alf. Beware!

In whose but a true subject's hands would place
A king his life. Be of good heart! No doubt
Palsy thy arm! The wishes of thy love,
Thy king, are with thee! Heaven be with thee too!

Guth. Away! I'll follow you! and see myself
This bloodless trial made [OSWITH and EDRIC go out.
Here minstrel, take
My child! Support her! Cheer her to abide
The issue of their strife. [Goes out

Alf. [*Supporting INA.*] Fair maiden, take
The minstrel's word, thy lover wins the game!
Thy fears are wrongs, where wrong thou least wouldst do!
Doubt on thy champion did another cast,
How would disdain arouse thy languid lip;
Colour thy frozen cheek from snow to flame;
And the expired lustre of thine eye
Re-kindle till it lighten'd! Maiden, list!
The hand's best sinew ever is the heart!
Thy lover's is the sound one! Think of that!
That's right! Look up! Take courage! Oswith throws
His brand away, and grapples Edric's! Ha!
Keep thy hold, Edric, if thou canst! A child's—
An infant's—is it to thy rival's grasp!
Look on thy lover, maiden! His chief's eye
Upon him, double is a vassal's strength;
What then the lover's, in his mistress' eye,
That strives for victory, and she the prize?
He sees thee! Mark you, how his frame distends,
As though with superhuman vigour fraught,
At his good angel's sight? Wave, maiden fair,
Wave your white arm to him! 'Twere ten times worth
A royal pennon in a monarch's hand,
Cheering the champion of his challenged crown!
You see! You see! Now puts he forth his might!
Edric gives way! He faints! His limbs are wax,
Wrestling with limbs of steel! He falls! His sword
Waves o'er his head, in noble Oswith's hand.
Hold up! Nay, gasp not! It were wrong to die,
Slain by thy gallant lover's victory!

Enter GUTHRUM, leading OSWITH.

Guth. There, Saxon, take my child; but thou'rt my thrall.
Thou must not bear her hence!

Alf. He should not!—Guthrum,
Where'er I speak of thee I'll give thee out
Indeed a royal chief! Farewell!

Guth. Not yet.
By Odin, thou shalt join our feast! I say
Thou shalt not go! I like thy company!
I'd hear thy harp again! Come! Follow all. [They go out.

Re-enter EDRIC.

Edr. Foil'd, but not yet o'ercome. The baffled foe
That will not turn a friend, is like to prove
A deadly one! Oswith has won the maid,
But not possess'd her yet! I'll mar his love!
That minstrel is not what he'd seem! Me
He shuns!—communes with Oswith!—Oswith knows him!
Some man of note—a prize to Guthrum—which
If Oswith lets escape, he wrongs the Dane!
Hence, will I work his ruin! To the banquet!
I'll watch their every movement; and unmask him,
Though I should tear the visor from his face! [*Goes out.*]

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The inside of Guthrum's Tent.*

GUTHRUM, OSWITH, INA, *Chiefs*, ALFRED, EDWY, &c. &c.

Enter EDRIC.

Guth. Come Edric, though not Fortune's friend, thou'rt
mine.

Why didst thou stay behind? Sit by me, Edric.

Look to the minstrel!—See that his goblet's full!—

Let it o'erflow—See to't!

Os. You feast not, love.

Ina. No more do you.

Os. I do not care to feast.

When the heart banquets, viands are pass'd by!

Edith. [*Entering.*] Your little Saxon favourite wants you,
Ina.

He clamours for you, nought can quiet him.

Ina. Nay, try and soothe him. If he baffles thee,

Why bring him hither, then! [*EDITH goes out.*]

Guth. Come, strike your harp!

We'd hear a strain; and prithee let it be

A warlike one. The triumph of the Dane—

Cast thou play that?

Alf. Accurs'd be the bard

That sings his country's shame! Her glory, chief,

I'll sing! My harp hath often rung with it!

Shall ring again! Or if the theme be done,

The strings, which many a year my hands have kiss'd

I'll tear from their loved frame, though as they snap

My heart-strings break, and I partake the ruin!

Guth. By Odin, but thou'rt bold! I like thee for't.

Play what thou wilt. Well! what's to be the strain?

Alf. The downfall of Cadwallon.

Guth. What was he?

Alf. The Saxons' foe.

ALFRED plays while EDWY sings.

Cry, cry to the eagle, her feast is prepared;
Cadwallon the Lion his falchion has bared!
Ten thousand spears dance to his trumpet's song,
As his march in thunder rolls along!
Does she hear? Will she come? Is she hurrying down!
All's ready, and waiting for her alone!

But the might's with the right,

From the cloud breaks the light;

And the head, high at morning—may lie low ere the night!

But why does the Saxon, Oswald, kneel?

Is't for his prayers he is dress'd in steel?

And wherefore kneel his Saxon bands?

Do they pray with their weapons in their hands?

Or are they contented to banquet the guest

Cadwallon the Lion has call'd to his feast?

But the might's with the right,

From the cloud breaks the light;

And the head, high at morning—may lie low ere the night!

Not long did the Saxon kneel—He arose

With a shout that made leap the bold hearts of his foes;

And on he rush'd, and down he bore

The spears that hunted him, before;

And the trumpet that sounded the first for the field—

Cadwallon the Lion's—was the first that was still'd!

For the might's with the right,

From the cloud breaks the light;

And the head, high at morning—may lie low ere the night!

But where is the eagle, was call'd to the feast?

She is come! but Cadwallon salutes not his guest!

She has fall'n to her meal without beckon or word!

She screams with her glee, but her mirth is unheard;

She has perch'd on the head of the warrior's son,

And the blood-drop that falls from her beak, is his own.

For the might's with the right,

From the cloud breaks the light;

And the head, high at morning—may lie low ere the night!

Guth. Well done! A strain that for a warrior's ear!

For me, thrice precious is the ruby cup

Since the enchanting strain has breathed upon it!

Drink, friends! Come!—Lips to brims; There's magic in

The cup! The health of him that pours it in—

“The bard,” the king of song, whose praise to sound

Becomes and not disparages the lips

Of kings themselves!

Alf. [*Aside.*] A regal nature his!

There's something in thee, Guthrum, I could claim

Close kindred with; but there's no grasping hands
 For thee and me, save in the deadly strife
 That ends the hope of one of us! I've gain'd
 All needful knowledge. Ward of caution none
 They keep—in our complete discomfiture
 Secure. An easy prey they're sure to fall
 To sudden onset from a band like ours,
 Strong in their cause, and resolute of heart.

Enter ELSWITH, pale, emaciated, and in wretched attire.

Guth. Ha! who art thou?

Els. Who play'd that strain!

Guth. Thou ask'st

As if reply were not a boon, but debt!

Whence gottest thou that air of high command?

Els. From misery!

Guth. She strangely teaches thee;
 Making thee stately that makes others bow!
 What seek'st thou here?

Els. I heard a strain without;
 I'd learn who play'd that strain.

Guth. That harper.

Els. He!

Hope, thou didst right to mock me! I have found thee
 Still, a dissembler; yet would trust thee still!
 But now farewell, thou thing of specious tongue,
 But hollow heart!—smooth face, that's but a mask
 To cover what we loathe—great promiser,
 Little performer!—coiner of false smiles,
 That turn out tears at last. I've done with thee!

[She sits in the centre.]

Otho. Thou sitt'st in Guthrum's presence.

Els. What of that?

I have sat down with Despair—a greater chief
 Than Guthrum—one could make him gnash his teeth!
 Ay, could he, mighty as your master is!
 I've sat down with Despair! Now show me Death!
 I'll take my seat by him! I fear him not!

Alf. Contain thyself, my heart!—It is my queen!

Guth. Her mind's distracted!

Alf. No!—It is her heart.

Ina. Perhaps she hungers. Give her food!

[They present food to her.]

Els. Too rich!

Famine partakes not such! She feeds on haws,
 Acorns, and roots, and berries! Give me these!
 For these we thank the Dane!

Guth. You thank the Dane!

Ha!

Alf. 'Tis a woman in affliction speaks!

Guth. And let her speak! Yet does she mar the cheer.
 Remove her!

Els. Touch me not! Stand off! My name
Is Woe! I am the child of Wrath! Behold
How she has smitten me, and smitten me,
That mine own eyes don't know me! One hot day,
Parch'd up with thirst and hunger, of a brook
I stoop'd to drink, and saw myself, and scream'd
At presence of a stranger! Time makes things
Unlike the things they were; but Wrath's the changer!

Guth. Persuade her to go hence.

Els. I hear you! Ill

You entertain the guests you force to greet you!

Guth. We force!

Els. Ay!—burn them out of house and home!

Murder their husbands, and their children!—scatter
Their friends, that where a thousand troop to-day
Not one is found to-morrow!—bid them search
For viands in the larders of the wolf
And vulture! which, deriding them, perforce
They come to you!

Guth. Hence with her! force her hence!

Alf. [*Starting up.*] Who hand of force lays on her, let him die!
And save thy manly name from the reproach,
That in thy presence, misery like this
Was offer'd insult with impunity,
And in the sacred person of a woman!

Els. The voice too!—No! it is not, cannot be!

Guth. Heard'st what she said?

Alf. I did.

Guth. Was't true?

Alf. Free speech
Accord'st thou me?

Guth. 'Tis thine!

Alf. The truth she speaks.

But one she seems 'mongst thousands, whom thy sword,
Ravenous of conquest, hath made widows of,
And childless mothers! Who, this hour thou feast'st,
Are famishing!—in their own land, without
Abode or food—and curse the hour when first
Thou trodd'st upon their shores!

Guth. In their own land?

[*He quits his seat and approaches ALFRED.*]

Surely I heard thee not! In their own land?
'Tis mine!—all mine!—their land!—air! water!—they
Themselves!—All mine! Mine! Mine! They! Thou! Ay,
thou!

That mock'st me!—bravest me!—thou, I say, art mine!
My thrall!—my slave!—a worm!—thing for my foot
To tread upon! Confess it!

Alf. No!

Guth. Thou wilt not!

Know'st thou the man thou tempt'st? Dost hear me?
Think'st thou

I speak to thee by my page, to whom thou'rt free
 To lend but half an ear?—mayst pass excused
 To bear no duty in thine air, thine eye?
 Mayst answer by a nod, or not at all? I'm Guthrum!
 He whose breath's thy life! A look—
 An only look of whose incenséd wrath
 Might strike thee dead! Dost thou not tremble?

Alf. No!

Guth. Up, slave, and beg thy life!

Alf. Why beg for that?

I deem not worth the only asking for;
 Moreover, that thou hast not power to take?

Guth. Not power to take? Was never Guthrum braved
 By mortal man before!—Not power to take!—
 Guthrum is but a child!—Strong as my wrath,
 My stronger wonder overpowers it quite,
 And from a tempest quells me to a calm!
 The reason? Come, I'll let thee have thy way,
 Givest thou me but the reason. Come!—the reason?
 Be it but half-sufficient, it shall weigh
 Acquittance of thee! Come! the reason—come!

Alf. Your royal word is warrant for my safety.
 What by your leave I speak, yourself forbids you
 To turn to evil 'gainst me.

Guth. Right, by Odin!

You're always right! and you may speak again,
 And freely as before!

[Resumes his seat.]

Ina. I prithee, Oswith,
 Persuade thy countryman to leave the tent.
 What now is safety may anon prove danger.
 Fierce as 'tis sudden is my father's wrath;
 And ever in the hour of social cheer
 Most to be fear'd, and look'd for—Speak to him!
 Conjure him to go hence. *[OSWITH approaches ALFRED.]*

Os. Had he a steed—

Ina. A steed?—An easy thing, my Oswith! Two—
 The fleetest in the camp—shall be at hand,
 Ready caparison'd—behind the tent—
 That way conduct him hence.

[Whispers an Attendant, who goes out, while OSWITH approaches ALFRED.]

Os. My liege, your ear.

Edr. *[To GUTHRUM.]* You mark, my lord, he whispers him.

Guth. I do.

Edr. They understand each other.

Guth. What of that?

Edr. I'll keep my eye upon them.

Guth. Heed them not.

Enter EDITH with ETHELRED.

Els. Whose child is that? not thine!

Edith. He is not mine.

Els. He's not a Danish child !

Edith. He's not.

Els. Is he

A Saxon then ?

Edith. He is a Saxon child.

Els. A Saxon ! Pray you let me see his face !
He's mine !

Edith. He shrinks from thee. He knows thee not.

Els. Me can he know, that do not know myself ?

He'll know my voice ! My child ! My Ethelred !

He knows it not ! and is my voice changed too ?

Or does my face false witness bear so strong,

He gives not credence to his mother's voice !

He is my child ! Believe it for my tears,

My choking utterance, my bended knees,

And my imploring arms that sue to you,

And ask you for my child !

Alf. [*Aside.*] Does Providence
Vouchsafe such mercy !

Guth. If the child is thine,
Thou'lt know where it was found.

Els. Too well I know !

Both when and where. A castle did ye sack,

Whose tenant was the mother of that child.

At night the cry arose, "*The Dane !*" "*The Dane !*"

And then the bursting gate !—the clash of arms !

The shout !—the yell !—the shriek !—the groan !—which rage

And cruelty, and fear, and pain supply,

To make the concert, fell, of savage war !

That mother's care too safe had lodged her child

In the remotest chamber of the whole.

She ask'd for it ; "*The Dane !*" was the reply.

She would have sought it ; but they held her back,

And cried, "*The Dane !*" She shriek'd to be set free ;

Now threaten'd !—now implored !—but all in vain !

"*The Dane !*" was all the answer she could get !

They forced her thence in cruel duty ! Ay !—

In duty forced the mother from her child ;

While lent the Dane a torch to light her path—

Her flaming towers that blazed about her boy !—

And she went mad !—yet still they bore her on ;

Nor other heed to her distraction gave,

Except to cry, "*The Dane !*" "*The Dane !*" "*The Dane !*"

[*Sinks exhausted upon a seat, clasping her forehead.*

GUTHRUM and EDRIC whisper.

Els. Alas ! they give not credence to my words !

Will no one plead for me ? My countryman,

Essay your art ! Hast not some melting strain—

Such as draw tears whether they will or not ?

As moves. [*Recognising ALFRED.*] I've found him !

Edr. [*Coming forward.*] Whom ? Whom hast thou found ?

Els. [*Recollecting herself.*] My boy !

Edr. [*Aside.*] I thought she meant the minstrel.

Alf. Yes!

She knows me, and I am a husband still!

I am a father and a husband still!

Oh, happiness, thou comest out of time!

Thou choosest ill the place to greet me in!

Thou mockest me to hold thine arms to me!

I dare not rush to their embrace! I'm poor,

With all the wealth thou say'st is mine again!

I dare not touch it! Better were it far,

I had not now been told on't.

Guth. Take the boy!

But first true answer to our question give.

The castle where we found him was the king's!

Clad as no vassal's offspring was the child.

If thou his mother art, thou art the queen!

Art thou so?

Alf. Guthrum, to the test I put

Thy nature! If 'tis worthy of thy state,

Thy prosperous fortune, and thy high renown,

Approve it now! Lo, Guthrum, do I play

The traitor for thy honour! In thy power

Thou hold'st the son and consort of thy foe!

Of Alfred! Use thy fortune as beseems thee!

Swear by thy God, they shall receive from thee

Safeguard of life and honour.

Guth. Ay, by Odin.

Els. Wouldst thou not take a ransom for us?

Guth. Yes!

Els. What ransom wilt thou take?

Guth. Thy husband's crown!

Els. Alas! he will not ransom us with that!

Alf. He should not!

Guth. Why?

Alf. He wears it for his people.

The day he put it on he vow'd himself

Of them the father! To their parent land

It wedded him! His proper consort she!

'Twixt him and them, he knows not wife, or child,

He dares allow to stand!

Guth. Minstrel, thou ravest!

He has not nature, who 'gainst nature's law

Could so deny his heart!

Alf. He may have more!

Guth. What?

Alf. The command of nature. The attribute

Of kings who feel the import of their titles.

Which stops their ears against her piercing cries!

Which shuts their eyes against her thrilling looks!

Which lifts them so 'bove earth, they seem as though

They sat in some attendant brighter sphere,

Wherefrom they look'd and ruled her!

Guth. Well thou said'st
Thy world was of the air! Thou dost not speak
Of things of earth! Thy sayings are not sooth!
I would thy king were here to prove thee but
A dreamer! With those jewels in his eye,
He would not see his crown! Yea, though it shone
Bright as it did before I thinn'd its studs!
Couldst find thy king?

Alf. I could.

Guth. Go seek him, then.
And when thou find'st him, greet him from me thus--
"Thy queen and son are now in Guthrum's power,
Pay thou but homage to the Dane, they're free."

Alf. I take my leave.

Els. Guthrum. A boon!

Guth. What is't?

Els. I'd send a message to my lord!

Guth. Thou shalt.

Stand all apart, that freely they confer.

Els. And dost thou go; and wilt thou leave us here?

Alf. I must. Alas! thou know'st not what thou say'st!

Els. Thou'lt leave us here! Dost thou not love our child?

Alf. Beyond my life!

Els. And me?

Alf. Beyond our child!

Els. And must thou leave me? Oh! I have search'd for
thee

Many, and many a day! Now fear'd thee, dead!
Now hoped thee, living! Search'd for thee alone!
One falling now; and now another off;
With my strong love unequal to keep pace.
Sleeping in woods and caves! On foot, by dawn;
Ne'er giving o'er till night again! Now food,
Now nothing! Scantily I fared to-day;
Yet 'twas not hunger brought me here, but thou,
In desperate hope to find thee! Art thou found,
But to be lost again?

Alf. So were I found,
Went I not instant hence. Look in my eyes,
And read the husband and the father there,
In nature's undissembling language vouch'd!
But, hear the king!

Els. Well!

Alf. Paramount of all,
My public function! Husband—father—friend—
All titles, and all ties are merged in that!
Approve thyself the consort of a king!
I leave thee to return to thee! Return,
With freedom for thy child—for thee—myself—
For all—for all must perish, or be free!
And soon I come! So cheer thy heart with hope!
Farewell!

Els. [*aloud*]. You'll bear my duty to my lord?

Alf. I will.

Els. Your hand that you will keep your word!

Alf. There, lady.

Els. Be thy hand my missive! Thus—
Thus with my tears I write my errand on't—
And with my lips—a faithful signet—seal it!
O, countryman! perhaps nor he nor thou
Shalt ever see me more! I feel as one
Amerced of life—that shakes a hand with all—
And asks a blessing from the meanest tongue!
Thy blessing, minstrel, ere thy mistress dies!

Alf. What love would ask to light on head beloved—
What faith and virtue Heaven's own warrant have
To ask of Heaven—light on thy honour'd head!

Edr. I'll see him eye to eye, ere he departs.

Alf. Farewell!

Edr. Stay, minstrel. Let me see thy face!

[*EDRIC stops ALFRED forcibly.*]

Os. All's lost! [*Half drawing his sword.*]

Alf. [*Turning fully and sternly upon EDR.*] There, traitor!

[*EDRIC, utterly confounded, staggers back.*]

Os. Fly, my liege!—Away!

[*ALFRED, EDWY, and OSWETH go out.*]

Guth. What moves thee, Edric? What's the matter?
Speak!

Why is thine eyeball fix'd, thy mouth agape?

What ails thy blood, that it forsakes thy cheek?

Why shakes thy frame?

Edr. My liege!

Guth. Out with it!

Edr. The minstrel!

Guth. What of the minstrel?

Edr. Oswith plays thee false!

No minstrel leaves the camp; but Oswith thence,

Treacherous to thee, conducts thine enemy,

Alfred, the Saxon king!

Guth. Ha, follow them!

Stop his retreat! Away! Alive or dead,

Have them before us! [*EDRIC, OTHO, and others go out.*]

Els. Mercy! Guthrum! Mercy! [*Clashing of swords.*]

Guth. Remove her!

Els. Where's the lightning!—What! no bolt
To blast the impious hand that threatens death

To his anointed head. O mercy! mercy!

[*She is forced off, EDITH following with the child.*]

Edr. [*without*]. Traitor, give way.

Os. [*without*]. Make way—for none I'll give.

[*The fighting continues.*]

Guth. Who aids him? Is there treason in the camp,
That thus the contest lasts? Give me my sword.

Ina. [*Kneeling to GUTHRUM.*] My father!

Guth. [*Not heeding her.*] Ho! my buckler and my spear!
With mine own hand will I transfix him!

Ina. Father!

Enter EDRIC, *wounded.*

Edr. At last, my lord, we've overpower'd him.

Guth. Whom?

Edr. Oswith.

Guth. And Alfred?

Edr. Alfred has escaped!

Guth. Lay Oswith in chains.

Ina. My father!

Guth. To the God

I give him!—Odin, take him!—He is thine!

By thy victorious spear he bleeds to thee. [*EDRIC goes out.*]

Give him my child!—the traitor! Give him my blood!

I'd pour it out upon the altar first!

I would, with mine own hand! I'd look on her!

And do it! Look on her! Up, girl, and hence!

Ha! Do I see a statue or my child?

That cheek is marble by its hue!—Those eyes—

The chisel makes as good, for any touch

Of sense that's in them! What is it I've done?

Oh! they have loved and pined, and loved again

As fresh as ever! Take her to her couch!

She'll sleep—will she sleep? There, gently! I am grown

From fire to ice with looking on her. Ha!

For what have I done this?—Why stand you here?

What! have I paid so dearly for the prize,

And do you let it go? Pursue! Pursue! [*They go out.*]

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Ina's Tent.*

A Recess in the centre, with a curtain drawn before it.

Enter GUTHRUM, EDITH, and OSCAR.

Guth. What say the priests?

Osc. You may not spare his life!

Your oath to Odin must be kept, unless

His country he forswears, and serves the God—

Conditions which he spurns. Would, else, the tide

Of your great nation's prosperous fortune ebb

To an eternal drought! Among the ranks

They run, thy oath reiterating, and, with words

Ambiguous, starting fears, you may retract,

And curse your people!

Guth. Let their altar reek!
Blood rain upon them till it drown them! Leave
The tent!

Osc. Shall they prepare to sacrifice?

Guth. Tell them, if for command of mine they wait,
I will not give it!—No! not for their god!
She speaks not? [*OSCAR goes out.*]

Edith. Nay, my lord, at times a word;
But none that leads to certain inference.

Guth. Has she not slept?

Edith. Nought but unnatural sleep—
Rest that might pass for wakefulness—that scarce
Doth shut the lid—which weariness itself
Beholding, ere 'twould taste, would watch; it seems
So far from sweet! All listlessness without,
While all within's astir!

Guth. I will not see her.

Edith. My lord?

Guth. I did not speak; or if I did,
'Twas not to thee! I thought myself a father!
I thought as never father loved his child
I loved my Ina! 'Twas my pride to show it;
Yea, even when she ruled me like a child!
I used to think that of my fiercest mood
She was the mistress, from my wildest flight
Could call me down, but lit my eye upon her,
As the loved lure the falcon!—and I've kill'd her!
I'm not a father!—No, I never loved her
But as a child, a toy! Come, show her to me!
Undraw the curtain! He that makes a corpse
Of what he loves, may sure be flint enough
To look upon't.

[*EDITH undraws the curtain, and INA is discovered sitting in a state of fixed abstraction. EDITH raises her, and leads her forward to a couch, INA moving as if it were mechanically.*]

Leave us to ourselves.

[*EDITH goes out.*]

Why, 'tis enough to make the sickly heart
Break out in laughter, when the very work
Our eyes could weep them tearless at, our hands
May boast the making of!

[*Approaches, and sits down beside her.*]

My Ina! Ina!—

My child! you'll speak to me?—What, are you ill?
How feel you?—You look well!—There, my own girl,
Lie in your father's bosom!—Speak to him!
What say'st thou, Sweet?—Wast not about to speak?
Thou wast. Go on, go on!—Speak to me—Ina;
Or I'll go mad!—Dost hear?—On my knees,
I pray you speak to me!—Now, this is wilful!
Away!—You but dissemble!—'Tis put on!—
For shame, for shame! You've seen my eyes in tears!

You've seen my knees upon the ground!—You know
 It is your father—your old father, and
 You'll not speak to him!—Think you he can't see?
 Why, any one could do't! To fix the eye
 And keep the visage motionless, and sit
 As you were riveted to your seat! A child
 Were scant of wit that lack'd such obvious power—
 Of simulation! I renounce you, Ina!—
 Will you not speak to me, my child? Speak to me! *[Going.*
Returns.
 A word—a whisper—anything!—a sign—
 To show me that you are not worse than dead—
 Alive, and just the same! I can be rash!
 I can give way to fury!—I will try
 If life be in thy heart! *[Draws his dagger, and rushes up to her.*
 I'd scare a stone!

[Wild discordant music is heard without. INA starts up and clasps her hands.]

Guth. Ha!

Ina. There it is!

Guth. She speaks!—She is alive!

Ina. I've listen'd for't

So long, I fear'd 'twould never come!

Guth. What, Ina?

[Music again.]

Ina. Again!

Guth. Do they prepare to lead him forth;
 The sacrifice will presently begin!
 They make a pretext of their god to mock
 My power!

Ina. He's ready!—Let me go to him!

Guth. To whom? Thy lover?

Ina. I should like to get
 My father's blessing first!

Guth. Thou hast it, Ina!

Ina. I know I have. Who says he does not love me?
 I'd not believe it, though he were to kill me!
 He'd do't in madness, and he'd kill himself
 When he had found he had done it! Bless his Ina?
 He always blesses me!—at morning when
 He sees me first, and then, again, at night!
 Yea, oftentimes through the day! He'd bless me, though
 I broke his heart; and I'll bless him, although
 He has broken mine!

Guth. She knows me not!

Ina. We'll wed

As never lovers did. We'll have our nuptials
 Of a new fashion. Who'd be bid to them,
 Let him bring tears with him, he's welcome—such
 As gush with sobs! We'll have no smiles at them!
 The meanest churl gets handfuls when he weds!
 Nor songs! such minstrelsy a beggar buys
 For thanks! No, give us shrieks! and laughter! but
 Such laughter as it withers joy to hear!—

As breaketh from the heart of madness!—as
Resounds from lips that wish their owners dead!

Guth. What mean those words, my child?

Ina. I'll wed him as

Ne'er wedded maid, to let him never from
My side; but dwell in such entrancement with him,
The day for us may go without his sun,
And night without her cloud! all converse cease,
Of tongue or eye; that not ourselves shall break
The silence sweet of our deep ecstasy.

Guth. Perception's all within; without is none.
Passion hath drunk up sense! I feel a touch
Of her condition while I look upon her—
Go mad! You had a daughter yesterday—
Brag of her now! Point to her cheek, and ask
If ever grew such smiles as blossom there!

And bid the ear that listens to her, note
The sweetness that it feasts on! [*Music.*] Hark! thou'rt
call'd!

What! not go through the task thou hast begun
So bravely? Slay thy child, and finish it! [*Rushes out.*]

Ina [*alone*]. They'd thwart a maid in her first love, they
would?

They think it easy, but they'll find it hard!
When first I thought I should become a bride,
Wondering how I would deck me, I ran through
The ranks of fairest flowers to pick me one
To set it in my bosom; and I remember
It was a rose I pitch'd on—There's my rose!

[*Draws a dagger, and returns it to her bosom.*
[*Music.*]

The rites begin,—Let me steal after them,
And watch the time! I'm coming to thee, Oswith!
I'll show thee how a Danish maid can love! [*Goes out.*]

SCENE II.—*Selwood Forest.*

Enter ODDUNE and OSWALD, meeting.

Od. No sign of Alfred?

Osw. None! Our scouts have all
Return'd, dishearten'd with their fruitless search.

Od. Where can he linger, with so fair a welcome
Impatient waiting him, as he would meet

From yonder gallant bands? The spirits now
That bear their crests so high, from his delay

To lead them on to action, will anon
Begin to droop—perchance may quite subside!

Osw. How many do we muster?

Od. By the last
Return, six thousand men.

Osw. The field shows fair!

Od. Fair cause—fair field! Who'd e'er expect so soon
To see the armour burnish'd up again
They cast aside for good! A pity 'twere
What shows such thrift should not be turn'd to use,
But, bootless, thrown away! They will not fight
Unless the king commands them!

Osw. See, my lord,
What movement's that?

Od. Here's one will tell us.

Edg. [*Entering.*] Be
Prepared, my lord. The soldiers clamour for
The king, and doubts are spreading through the ranks;
You humour them—he will not come to lead them.
Their chiefs conduct them hither, from your own lips
Assurance to receive, and fair encouragement.

Enter EGBERT, KENRICK, ARTHUR, *Chief, and Soldiers.*

Eg. Now Kenrick, speak! Say what the soldiers want.

Od. Well, gallant friends! Is England to be free?
Shall we change places with our conquerors,
Or still endure the yoke?

Ken. We want the king!
Let him appear, we cannot meet the foe
Too soon!

Od. As surely shall you see him, as
You long to see the foe!

Ken. But when, my lord?
'Tis that we'd know! When was the king the last
Upon the field? Has he not ever, on
The eve of battle, earlier than his chiefs,
Been out; with looks of ardour heartening us?—
Our morning sun, that never clouded rose—
Enduing us with life and vigour new!
At most we muster bare six thousand men
To meet the Danish host! The king, among us,
Would make our numbers treble! Show us the king.
The only waving of his plume in battle
Were worth a hundred spears in hands as bold
As ever brandish'd weapon!

Od. What, and if
Indeed he should not come? Ought you to feel
Your tyrant's feet upon your necks the less?
Your king is present in his cause! Be that
Your king! [*ALFRED enters, still disguised.*
Whoever leads you, meet the Dane!
I speak not, friends, because I'm next in place!
I care not for myself! Point out my post;
The van, the rear; I'll be content to take
My stand beside the man of meanest note
Among you! Make yon minstrel without helm
Or sword your leader, I will follow him!

So that I fight, I care not in what rank!
 Let him who makes the absence of his king,
 Plea to desert his country and his king,
 Fall off! So Heaven sustain me in the cause,
 Although our Alfred's presence now would add
 Ten other richer lives to mine; yet say
 He should not come, this faithful sword I draw,
 I will not sheathe till it has struck a blow
 For liberty!

Eg. I second you, brave Oddune.

Osw. And so do I!

Od. And so will every man,
 Unless there be among the people one
 That does not love his king!

Ken. No, Oddune, no!
 The people live but for their king!

Alf. [*Discovering himself.*] The king
 Lives only for his people! Oh, my people!
 You are the drops of blood that make your king!
 And do I see you once again in arms!

[*Bursts into tears. The chiefs and general soldiers
 seem affected.*]

O friends! Why draw you hands across your eyes,
 If mine should be ashamed of what they do?
 We've met again, my friends! Who is the foe?
 Shall sunder us again? O England! England!
 Too fair—too richly gifted—not to tempt
 The spoiler—well that thou hast sons, too true,
 To leave thee to his ravine! Thou'lt be free
 Till thou art childless! Think not, gallant friends,
 An hour I've squander'd that was due to you,
 And to our common country! I have seen
 The Danish camp!

Od. Their camp, my liege!

Alf. Have stood

In Guthrum's very presence! That disguise
 Will tell thee how. They'd fall an easy prey
 To half our numbers! Friends! a royal stake
 I've laid upon your heads, that you will win
 The day!

Od. What stake, my liege?

Alf. Your prince and queen!

They're in the spoiler's power. I might, indeed,
 Have ransom'd them, but what he ask'd, your king could not
 afford to pay.

Od. What was't, my liege?

Alf. My people, Oddune!

Eg. In the spoiler's power

Our prince and queen! What wait we for?

Od. For nothing.

But the king's word to move upon the foe!

Alf. Upon him, then! Now think you on the things

You most do love! Husbands and fathers on
 Their wives and children—lovers upon their mistresses—
 And all upon their country! When you use
 Your weapons, think on the beseeching eyes
 To whet them could have lent you tears for water.
 Oh, now be men or never! From your hearths
 Thrust the unbidden feet, that from their nooks
 Your aged fathers drove—your wives and babes!
 The couches your fair-handed daughters used
 To spread, let not the vaunting stranger press,
 Weary from spoiling you! Your roofs that hear
 The wanton riot of the intruding guest
 That mocks their masters—clear them for the sake
 Of the manhood, to which all that's precious clings,
 Else perishes. The land that bore you—oh!
 Do honour to her! Let her glory in
 Your breeding!—Rescue her—Revenge her, or
 Ne'er call her mother more! Come on, my friends!
 And where you take your stand upon the field,
 Thence, howsoever you advance, resolve
 A foot you'll ne'er recede; while from the tongues
 Of womanhood and childhood, helplessness
 Invokes you to be strong! Come on! Come on!
 I'll bring you to the foe! And when you meet him,
 Strike hard! Strike home! Strike while a blow
 Is in an arm! Strike till you're free, or fall! [They go out.]

SCENE III.—A Wood.

The statue of Odin in the centre; before it an altar prepared for sacrifice. Enter procession of sacrifice, in the following order:—Danish Chief, with a body of Danish Soldiers; a body of Danish Chiefs, and AMUND, EDRIC, and GUTHRUM; a body of Danish Priests; Assistants with torches; Boys carrying censers; one Boy with a cushion, on which the knife of sacrifice is laid; Chief Priest of Odin; OSWITH; a body of Danish Soldiers. The procession marches to the following chorus:—

Prepare the faggot—light the brand—
 The victim's ready for the God!

The knife is bare in the sacred hand,
 That on the altar pours the blood!

Prepare!—Prepare!—Prepare!—
 Great Odin's rites

The mortal who slights,

His roof shall blaze in peace—his spear shall break in war!

Guth. Saxon! Thou hast of life a moment yet
 At thy command—Use it for life!—for love!—
 For liberty! But say the word, at once

The weapon, ready for thy blood, is sheath'd,
Unstain'd and harmless!

Os. I'm prepared to die!

Priest. Saxon!

Os. I come!

Priest. Come! Bare his breast! Odin, receive thy victim!

Ina. [*Rushing in.*] Oswith, I wed thee thus!

[*She is on the point of plunging the dagger into her heart; OSWITH bursts from the Priest and arrests her arm.*]

Os. Hold, Ina, hold!

Thou shalt not die with Oswith!

Guth. Oswith, live!

Although the God himself demanded him,

He shall not die who saves my Ina's life!

Priest. The servants of the God protect his rights!

Danish Soldiers. [*Rushing in.*] The Saxon's in the camp,
and down upon us!

Alf. [*without.*] Press on—press on—the first that comes to
blows

Is the king's squire! Press on!

[*The Danes front the stage on which the Saxons are coming, who enter, headed by ALFRED. Danes are driven off; ALFRED and GUTHRUM engage; GUTHRUM is disarmed.*]

Alf. Guthrum, live

The friend of Alfred! Serve the God he serves!

To wear a crown, thou need'st not fight for one,

Except to keep it! Fair Northumbria

Receives thee for her king—My queen and son!

[*ODDUNE leads on ELSWITH and ETHELRED.*]

Enter EGBERT and EDRIC, guarded.

Alf. Who's he?

Eg. A traitor to our cause, my lord—

Whose sword has made more havoc 'mongst our people,

Than any ten of your foes! His hand, accurst,

It was that fired the hold where slept your queen

And son.

Ken. and others. Despatch him!

Alf. Hold! This victory

I will perpetuate by such an act

As shall from future kings remove the power

To make their public functions pander to

Their private gust! Select twelve men, his peers,

And swearing them upon the book of God,

As they shall answer at the judgment-day,

To try their prisoner fairly, let the charge

Be brought before them; and as they decide,

Be finally his innocence or guilt

Establish'd. Hence! Hereby shall private right,

Which, guarded, fortifieth, more than arms,

The conservator of the public weal,
 Be sacred even from the sceptre's touch!
 Thus to a people faithful to their king,
 A faithful king an institution gives
 That makes the lowly cottage lofty as
 The regal dome—holds justice paramount
 Of all—before her throne the peasant and
 The king himself on equal footing brings!—
 A gift which you'll preserve for ever whole!
 From which, as from your blood, pollution keep!
 Which, if you're ask'd to render back, by all
 You owe yourselves, your country, and the throne,
 You'll answer, no! Which, when you'd name, you'll call
 Trial by Jury!

Guth. Great the victory
 That kings gain o'er themselves. Blest are the heads
 That bow to sway like thine!

Alf. My countrymen!
 Sons of the sea—henceforth her restless plain
 Shall be your battle-field! There shall you meet
 The threat'ning storm of war! There shall it burst,
 Its rage unfelt at home—its din unheard!
 You've fought like England's true-born sons, to-day!
 You've taught a lesson to her sons to come!
 By your example fired, should e'er a foe
 In after-times invade her envied shores,
 Her sons, of all descriptions and degrees,
 To succour her, shall grapple soul and hand;
 Rampart her throne with living walls of hearts,
 And teach the fell invader that the sea
 Embraced her, never to betray her glory!

END OF ALFRED THE GREAT.

THE HUNCHBACK:

A Play.

TO MAJOR FRANCIS CAMPBELL

(LATE OF THE 8TH, OR KING'S OWN).

MY DEAR SIR,

As an enthusiastic admirer of the Drama, and as a gentleman from whom, solely on account of my connection with it, I have received the most flattering attention, you are entitled to the Dedication of this Play, and it is accordingly inscribed to you,

By your grateful Servant,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN IN 1832.)

<i>Julia</i>	Miss F. KEMBLE.
<i>Helen</i>	Miss TAYLOR.
<i>Master Walter</i>	Mr. J. S. KNOWLES.
<i>Sir Thomas Clifford</i>	Mr. C. KEMBLE.
<i>Lord Tinsel</i>	Mr. WRENCH.
<i>Master Wilford</i>	Mr. J. MASON.
<i>Modus</i>	Mr. ABBOTT.
<i>Master Heartwell</i>	Mr. EVANS.
<i>Gaylove</i>	Mr. HENRY.
<i>Fathom</i>	Mr. MEADOWS.
<i>Thomas</i>	Mr. BARNES.
<i>Stephen</i>	Mr. PAYNE.
<i>Williams</i>	Mr. IRWIN.
<i>Simpson</i>	Mr. BRADY.
<i>Waiter</i>	Mr. HEATH.
<i>Holdwell</i>	Mr. BENDER.
<i>Servants</i>	{ Mr. J. COOPER. Mr. LOLLETT.

THE HUNCHBACK.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Tavern.*

On one side SIR THOMAS CLIFFORD, *at a table, with wine before him; on the other,* MASTER WILFORD, GAYLOVE, HOLDWELL, *and* SIMPSON, *likewise taking wine.*

Wilf. Your wine, sirs! your wine! You do not justice to mine host of the Three Tuns, nor credit to yourselves; I swear the beverage is good! It is as palatable poison as you will purchase within a mile round Ludgate! Drink, gentlemen; make free. You know I am a man of expectations; and hold my money as light as the purse in which I carry it.

Gay. We drink, Master Wilford. Not a man of us has been chased, as yet.

Wilf. But you fill not fairly, sirs! Look at my measure! Wherefore a large glass, if not for a large draught? Fill, I pray you, else, let us drink out of thimbles! This will never do for the friends of the nearest of kin to the wealthiest peer in Britain.

Gay. We give you joy, Master Wilford, of the prospect of advancement which has so unexpectedly opened to you.

Wilf. Unexpectedly indeed! But yesterday arrived the news that the Earl's only son and heir had died; and, to-day, has the Earl, himself, been seized with a mortal illness.—His dissolution is looked for hourly; and I, his cousin in only the third degree, known to him but to be unnoticed by him—a decayed gentleman's son—glad of the title and revenues of a scrivener's clerk,—am the undoubted successor to his estates and coronet.

Gay. Have you been sent for?

Wilf. No; but I have certified to his agent, Master Walter, the Hunchback, my existence, and peculiar propinquity; and momentarily expect him, here.

Gay. Lives there any one that may dispute your claim,—I mean vexatiously?

Wilf. Not a man, Master Gaylove. I am the sole remaining branch of the family tree.

Gay. Doubtless you look for much happiness from this change of fortune?

submaker

*Though his
information is
given*

*to send of
suspect
the hunch
mid
set on
some
inherit*

Wilf. A world! Three things have I an especial passion for. The finest hound, the finest horse, and the finest wife in the kingdom, Master Gaylove!

Gay. The finest wife?

Wilf. Yes, sir; I marry. Once the earldom comes into my line, I shall take measures to perpetuate its remaining there. I marry, sir! I do not say that I shall love. My heart has changed mistresses too often to settle down in one servitude now, sir. But fill, I pray you, friends. This, if I mistake not, is the day whence I shall date my new fortunes; and, for that reason, hither have I invited you; that, having been so long my boon companions, you shall be the first to congratulate me.

Enter Waiter.

Waiter. You are wanted, Master Wilford.

Wilf. By whom?

Waiter. One Master Walter.

Wilf. His lordship's agent! News, sirs! Show him in! [Waiter goes out.]

My heart's a prophet, sirs.—The Earl is dead.

Enter MASTER WALTER.

Well, Master Walter. How accost you me?

Wal. As your impatience shows me you would have me.—
My lord, the Earl of Rochdale!

Gay. Give you joy!

Hold. All happiness, my lord!

Simp. Long life and health unto your lordship!

Gay. Come!

We'll drink to his lordship's health! 'Tis two o'clock,

We'll e'en carouse till midnight! Health, my lord!

Hold. My lord, much joy to you!

Simp. All good to your lordship!

Wal. Give something to the dead!

Gay. Give what?

Wal. Respect!

He has made the living! First to him that's gone,

Say "Peace!"—and then with decency to revels!

Gay. What means the knave by revels?

Wal. Knave?

Gay. Ay, knave!

Wal. Go to! Thou'rt flush'd with wine!

Gay. Thou sayest false!

Though didst thou need a proof thou speakest true,

I'd give thee one. Thou seest but one lord here,

And I see two!

Wal. Reflect'st thou on my shape?

Thou art a villain!

Gay. [Starting up.] Ha!

Wal. A coward, too!

Draw!

[Drawing his sword.]

19 recently added
2 under those
of many in
to 19
& 19
not for

flattery
but all
the very
far to
and so

i the voice of
morality

Gay. Only mark him! how he struts about!
How laughs his straight sword at his noble back

Wal. Does it? It cuffs thee for a liar then!

[*Strikes GAYLOVE with his sword.*

Gay. A blow!

Wal. Another, lest you doubt the first!

Gay. His blood on his own head! I'm for you, sir! [*Draws.*

Clif. Hold, sir! This quarrel's mine!

[*Coming forward and drawing.*

Wal. No man shall fight for me, sir!

Clif. By your leave,

Your patience, pray! My lord, for so I learn
Behoves me to accost you—for your own sake,
Draw off your friend!

Wal. Not till we have a bout, sir!

Clif. My lord, your happy fortune ill you greet!—
I'll greet it those who love you—greeting thus
The herald of it!

Wal. Sir, what's that to you?

Let go my sleeve!

Clif. My lord, if blood be shed
On the fair dawn of your prosperity,
Look not to see the brightness of its day.

'Twill be o'ercast throughout!

Gay. My lord, I'm struck!

Clif. You gave the first blow, and the hardest one!

Look, sir; if swords you needs must measure, I'm
Your mate, not he!

Wal. I'm mate for any man!

Clif. Draw off your friend, my lord, for your own sake!

Wilf. Come, Gaylove! let's have another room.

Gay. With all my heart, since 'tis your lordship's will.

Wilf. That's right! Put up! Come, friends!

[*WILFORD and Friends go out.*

Wal. I'll follow him!

Why do you hold me? 'Tis not courteous of you!
Think'st thou I fear them? Fear! I rate them but
As dust! dross! offals! Let me at them!—Nay,
Call you this kind? then kindness know I not;
Nor do I thank you for't! Let go, I say!

Clif. Nay, Master Walter, they're not worth your wrath!

Wal. How know you me for Master Walter? By
My hunchback, eh!—my stilts of legs and arms,
The fashion more of ape's than man's? Aha!
So you have heard them, too—their savage gibes
As I pass on,—“There goes my lord!” Aha!
God made me, sir, as well as them and you!
'Sdeath! I demand of you, unhand me, sir!

Clif. There, sir, you're free to follow them! Go forth,
And I'll go too: so on your wilfulness
Shall fall whate'er of evil may ensue.
Is't fit you waste your choler on a burr?

*Let's send home
to his deformity
the words
kill Gaylove for
hunchback. That will
better than most*

The nothings of the town; whose sport it is
To break their villain jests on worthy men,
The worthier the fitter! Fie for shame!
Regard what such would say? So would not I,
No more than heed a cur.

Wal. You're right, sir; right.
For twenty crowns!—so there's my rapier up!
You've done me a good turn against my will;
Which, like a wayward child, whose pet is off,
That made him restive under wholesome check,
I now right humbly own, and thank you for.

Clif. No thanks, good Master Walter, owe you me!
I'm glad to know you, sir.

Wal. I pray you, now,
How did you learn my name? Guess'd I not right?
Was't not my comely hunch that taught it you?

Clif. I own it.

Wal. Right, I know it; you tell truth.
I like you for't.

Clif. But when I heard it said
That Master Walter was a worthy man,
Whose word would pass on 'change soon as his bond;
A liberal man—for schemes of public good
That sets down tens, where others units write;
A charitable man—the good he does,
That's told of, not the half—I never more
Could see the hunch on Master Walter's back!

Wal. You would not flatter a poor citizen?

Clif. Indeed, I flatter not!

Wal. I like your face—
A frank and honest one! Your frame's well knit,
Proportion'd, shaped!

Clif. Good sir!

Wal. Your name is Clifford?—
Sir Thomas Clifford. Humph! You're not the heir
Direct to the fair baronetcy? He
That was, was drown'd, abroad. Am I not right?
Your cousin, was't not?—so succeeded you
To rank and wealth, your birth ne'er promised you.

Clif. I see you know my history.

Wal. I do.
You're lucky who conjoin the benefits
Of penury and abundance; for I know
Your father was a man of slender means.
You do not blush, I see. That's right! Why should you?
What merit to be dropp'd on fortune's hill?
The honour is to climb it. You'd have done it;
For you were train'd to knowledge, industry,
Frugality, and honesty,—the sinews
That surest help a man to gain the top,
And then will keep him there. I have a clerk,

into a knave
other might
character
more for feeling
Sir Clifford's a
speaking this a
from since
is brought

he has
good sense
though a Quaker
learned
also killed
but he
can hold
own
the
of the
on

poor
people
succeeded
what is by
suffer
the

Once served your father; there's the riddle for you.
Humph! I may thank you for my life to-day.

Clif. I pray you say not so.

Wal. But I will say so!

Because I think so, know so, feel so, sir!
Your fortune, I have heard, I think, is ample!
And doubtless you live up to't?

Clif. 'Twas my rule,
And is so still, to keep my outlay, sir,
A span within my means.

Wal. A prudent rule!

The turf is a seductive pastime?

Clif. Yes.

Wal. You keep a racing stud? You bet?

Clif. No, neither.

'Twas still my father's precept—"Better owe
A yard of land to labour, than to chance
Be debtor for a rood!"

Wal. 'Twas a wise precept.

You've a fair house—you'll get a mistress for it?

Clif. In time!

Wal. In time? 'Tis time thy choice were made!

Is't not so yet? Or is thy lady love

The newest still thou seest?

Clif. Nay, not so.

I'd marry, Master Walter, but old use—
For since the age of thirteen, I have lived
In the world—has made me jealous of the thing
That flatter'd me with hope of profit. Bargains
Another would snap up, might lie, for me;
Till I had turn'd and turn'd them! Speculations,
That promised twenty, thirty, forty, fifty,
Ay, cent-per-cent. returns, I would not launch in,
When others were afloat, and out at sea;
Whereby I made small gains, but miss'd great losses.
As ever, then, I look'd before I leap'd,
So do I now.

Wal. Thou'rt all the better for it!

[*Aside.*] Let's see! Hand free—heart whole—well-favour'd
—so!

Rich—titled—let that pass!—kind, valiant, prudent—

Sir Thomas, I can help thee to a wife,

Hast thou the luck to win her!

Clif. Master Walter!

You jest?

Wal. I do not jest!—I like you!—Mark!—

I like you—and I like not every one!

I say a wife, sir, can I help you to,

The pearly texture of whose dainty skin

Alone were worth thy baronetcy! Form!

And feature has she, wherein move and glow

again the idea
of position and
the virtue of honesty
the compliments
of matrimony

the for Schenck
the wool-merchant

Plot the nucleus
Not the
he called
between
sir Clifford
and mistress
Welford
both of
the wife

the Victorian
idea of a lady
or perfection
of figure. The hunchback
cannot

The charms, that in the marble, cold and still,
 Cull'd by the sculptor's jealous skill and joined there,
 Inspire us! Sir, a maid, beneath whose feet,
 A duke—a duke might lay his coronet,
 To lift her to his state, and partner her!
 A fresh heart too!—a young fresh heart, sir; one
 That Cupid has not toy'd with; and a warm one—
 Fresh, young, and warm!—Mark that! A mind to boot—
 Wit, sir; sense, taste;—a garden strictly tended—
 Where nought but what is costly flourishes!
 A consort for a king, sir! You shall see her!

Clif. I thank you, Master Walter! As you speak,
 Methinks I see me at the altar-foot!

Her hand fast lock'd in mine!—the ring put on!
 My wedding-bell rings merry in my ear;
 And round me throng glad tongues that give me joy
 To be the bridegroom of so fair a bride!

Wal. What! sparks so thick? We'll have a blaze anon!

Servant. [*Entering.*] The chariot's at the door.

Wal. It waits in time!

Sir Thomas, it shall bear thee to the bower
 Where dwells this fair—for she's no city belle,
 But e'en a sylvan goddess!

Clif. Have with you!

Wal. You'll bless the day you served the Hunchback, sir!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*A Garden before a Country House.*

Enter JULIA and HELEN.

Helen. I like not, Julia, this your country life.
 I'm weary on't!

Julia. Indeed? So am not I!
 I know no other; would no other know!

Helen. You would no other know! Would you not know
 Another relative?—another friend—
 Another house—another anything,
 Because the ones you have already please you?
 That's poor content! Would you not be more rich,
 More wise, more fair? The song that last you learn'd
 You fancy well; and therefore shall you learn
 No other song? Your virginal, 'tis true,
 Hath a sweet tone; but does it follow thence,
 You shall not have another virginal?

You may, love, and a sweeter one; and so
 A sweeter life may find, than this you lead!

Julia. I seek it not. Helen, I'm constancy!

Helen. So is a cat, a dog, a silly hen,
 An owl, a bat,—where they are wont to lodge,
 That still sojourn, nor care to shift their quarters.
 Thou'rt constancy? I am glad I know thy name!

The spider comes of the same family,
That in his meshy fortress spends his life,
Unless you pull it down and scare him from it.
And so thou'rt constancy? Art proud of that?
I'll warrant thee I'll match thee with a snail
From year to year that never leaves his house!
Such constancy forsooth!—A constant grub
That houses ever in the self-same nut
Where he was born, till hunger drives him out,
Or plunder breaketh through his castle wall!
And so, in very deed, thou'rt constancy!

Julia. Helen, you know the adage of the tree;—
I've ta'en the bend. This rural life of mine,
Enjoin'd me by an unknown father's will,
I've led from infancy. Debar'd from hope
Of change, I ne'er have sigh'd for change. The town
To me was like the moon, for any thought
I e'er should visit it—nor was I taught
To think it half so fair!

Helen. Not half so fair!
The town's the sun, and thou hast dwelt in night
E'er since thy birth, not to have seen the town!
Our women there are queens, and kings our men;
Their houses palaces!

Julia. And what of that?
Have your town-palaces a hall like this?
Couches so fragrant? walls so high-adorn'd?
Casements with such festoons, such prospects, Helen,
As these fair vistas have? Your kings and queens!
See me a May-day queen, and talk of them!

Helen. Extremes are ever neighbours. 'Tis a step
From one to the other! Were thy constancy
A reasonable thing—a little less
Of constancy—a woman's constancy—
I should not wonder wert thou ten years hence
The maid I know thee now; but, as it is,
The odds are ten to one, that this day year
Will see our May-day queen a city one!

Julia. Never! I'm wedded to a country life!
O, did you hear what Master Walter says!
Nine times in ten, the town's a hollow thing,
Where what things are is nought to what they seem;
Where merit's name laughs merit's self to scorn!
Where friendship and esteem, that ought to be
The tenants of men's hearts, lodge in their looks
And tongues alone. Where little virtue, with
A costly keeper, passes for a heap;
A heap, for none, that has a homely one!
Where fashion makes the law—your umpire which
You bow to, whether it has brains or not!
Where Folly taketh off his cap and bells,
To clap on Wisdom, which must bear the jest!

The dialogue
is really
a debate
between town
and country.

the town
rejected

recalls "Up
the Villa
Dark the
City" &
Browning

constancy.
This reinforces
our
belief that
Walter is
admirably
delimited

the town is
ordained
high Julia

The town
is false
and
feels
that
she
will
suddenly
show respect
to him when it is
too late

Where to pass current you must seem the thing,
The passive thing, that others think; and not
Your simple, honest, independent self!

Helen. Ay: so says Master Walter. See I not
What can you find in Master Walter, Julia,
To be so fond of him!

Julia. He's fond of me!

I've known him since I was a child. E'en then,
The week I thought a weary-heavy one,
That brought not Master Walter. I had those
About me, then, that made a fool of me,
As children oft are fool'd; but more I loved
Good Master Walter's lesson, than the play
With which they'd surfeit me. As I grew up,
More frequent Master Walter came, and more
I loved to see him! I had tutors then,
Men of great skill and learning—but not one
That taught like Master Walter. What they'd show me,
And I, dull as I was, but doubtful saw,—
A word from Master Walter made as clear
As daylight! When my schooling days were o'er—
That's now good three years past—three years—I vow
I'm twenty, Helen!—well, as I was saying,
When I had done with school, and all were gone,
Still Master Walter came!—And still he comes,
Summer or winter!—frost or rain! I've known
The snow upon a level with the hedge,
Yet there was Master Walter!

Helen. Who comes here?

A carriage, and a gay one—Who alights?
Pshaw! Only Master Walter! What see you,
Which thus repairs the arch of the fair brow,
A frown was like to spoil?—A gentleman!
One of our town kings! Mark!—How say you now?
Wouldst be a town queen, Julia?—Which of us,
I wonder, comes he for?

Julia. For neither of us!

He's Master Walter's clerk, most like.

Helen. Most like!

Mark him as he comes up the avenue;
So looks a clerk! A clerk has such a gait!
So does a clerk dress, Julia!—Mind his hose—
They're very like a clerk's! a diamond loop
And button, note you, for his clerkship's hat!
O, certainly a clerk! A velvet cloak,
Jerkin of silk, and doublet of the same!—
For all the world a clerk! See, Julia, see,
How master Walter bows, and yields him place,
That he may first go in,—A very clerk!
I'll learn of thee, love, how to know a clerk!

Julia. I wonder who he is!

Helen. Wouldst like to know?

Remember
and say the
miserable demands
of the city

The
givers
nature of the
kind and good
see not for
society despite
but the
heart.

have in
rough
I am
a little
not
dynamism
used.

Wouldst for a fancy, ride to town with him?

I prophesy he comes to take thee thither!

Julia. He ne'er takes me to town! No, Helen, no!

To town who will, a country life for me!

Helen. We'll see!

Enter FATHOM.

Fath. You're wanted, madam,

Julia [embarrassed]. Which of us?

Fath. You, madam.

Helen. Julia! what's the matter? Nay,
Mount not the rose so soon! He must not see it
A month hence! 'Tis love's flower, which once she wears,
The maid is all his own!

Julia. Go to!

Helen. Be sure

He comes to woo thee! He will bear thee hence!
He'll make thee change the country for the town!

Julia. I'm constancy. Name he the town to me,
I'll tell him what I think on't!

Helen. Then you guess
He comes a wooing?

Julia. I guess nought!

Helen. You do!

At your grave words, your lips, more honest, smile,
And show them to be traitors. Hie to him!

Julia. Hie thee to soberness.

[Goes out.]

Helen. Ay, will I, when,
Thy bridemaids, I shall hie to church with thee.

Well, Fathom, who is come?

Fath. I know not.

Helen. What!

Didst thou not hear his name?

Fath. I did.

Helen. What is't?

Fath. I noted not.

Helen. What hast thou ears for, then?

Fath. What good were it for me to mind his name?

I do but what I must do. To do that

Is labour quite enough!

Wal. [without]. What, Fathom!

Fath. Here.

Wal. [Entering.] Here, sirrah! Wherefore didst not come
to me?

Fath. You did not bid me come.

Wal. I call'd thee.

Fath. Yes,

And I said "Here;" and waited then to know
Your worship's will with me.

Wal. We go to town.

Thy mistress, thou, and all the house.

Fath. Well, sir?

*the present
Fathom says
supplies
the comedy*

Wal. Mak'st thou not ready then to go to town?

Fath. You did not bid me to make ready, sir.

Wal. Hence, knave, despatch! [*FATHOM goes out.*]

Helen. Go we to town?

Wal. We do;

'Tis now her father's will, she sees the town.

Helen. I'm glad, on't! Goes she to her father?

Wal. No.

At the desire of thine, she, for a term,
Shares roof with thee.

Helen. I'm very glad on't.

Wal. What!

You like her then? I thought you would. 'Tis time
She sees the town.

Helen. It has been time for that

These six years!

Wal. By thy wisdom's count. No doubt
You've told her what a precious place it is?

Helen. I have.

Wal. I even guess'd as much. For that
I told thee of her; brought thee here to see her;
And pray'd thee to sojourn a space with her;
That its fair space, from thy too fair report,
Might strike a novice less,—so less deceive her.
I did not put thee under check.

Helen. 'Twas right,—

Else had I broken loose, and run the wilder!
So knows she not her father yet? That's strange.
I prithee how does mine?

Wal. Well—very well.

News for thee.

Helen. What?

Wal. Thy cousin is in town.

Helen. My cousin *Modus*?

Wal. Much do I suspect

That cousin's nearer to thy heart than blood.

Helen. Pshaw! Wed me to a musty library!

Love him who nothing loves but Greek and Latin!

But, Master Walter, you forget the main

Surpassing point of all! Who's come with you?

Wal. Ay, that's the question!

Helen. Is he soldier or

Civilian?—lord or gentleman? He's rich,

If that's his chariot! Where is his estate?

What brings it in? Six thousand pounds a year?

Twelve thousand, may be! Is he bachelor,

Or husband?—Bachelor I'm sure he is!

Comes he not hither wooing, Master Walter?

Nay, prithee, answer me!

Wal. Who says thy sex

Are curious? That they're patient, I'll be sworn;

And reasonable—very reasonable—

*O gem the
idea of
confront
upon my
child
not
ella
her
for
at
myself
yell
phil
can
po
he
ne
can
be
do*

To look for twenty answers in a breath !
 Come, thou shalt be enlighten'd—but propound
 Thy questions one by one ! Thou'rt far too apt
 A scholar ! My ability to teach
 Will ne'er keep pace, I fear, with thine to learn. [*They go out.*]

SCENE III.—*An Apartment in the House.*

Enter JULIA, followed by CLIFFORD.

Julia. No more ! I pray you, sir, no more !

Clif. I love you !

Julia. You mock me, sir !

Clif. Then is there no such thing

On earth as reverence ; honour filial, the fear
 Of kings, the awe of supreme Heaven itself,
 Are only shows and sounds that stand for nothing.
 I love you !

Julia. You have known me scarce a minute !

Clif. Say but a moment, still I say I love you !
 Love's not a flower that grows in the dull earth !—
 Springs by the calendar !—must wait for sun—
 For rain !—matures by parts !—must take its time
 To stem, to leaf, to bud, to blow ! It owns
 A richer soil, and boasts a quicker seed !
 You look for it, and see it not ; and lo !
 E'en while you *look*, the peerless flower is up,
 Consummate in the birth !

Julia. You're from the town ;
 How comes it, sir, you seek a country wife ?

Clif. In joining contrasts lieth love's delight.
 Complexion, stature, nature, mateth it,
 Not with their kinds, but with their opposites.
 Hence hands of snow in palms of russet lie ;
 The form of Hercules affects the sylph's ;
 And breasts, that ease the lion's fear-proof heart,
 Find their meet lodge in arms where tremors dwell !
 Haply for this, on Afric's swarthy neck,
 Hath Europe's priceless pearl been seen to hang,
 That makes the orient poor ! So with degrees,
 Rank passes by the circlet-graced brow,
 Upon the forehead, bare, of notelessness
 To print the nuptial kiss. As with degrees
 So is't with habits ; therefore I, indeed
 A gallant of the town, the town forsake,
 To win a country wife !

Julia. Who marries me
 Must lead a country life.

Clif. The life I'd lead !
 But fools would fly from it ; for O ! 'tis sweet !
 It finds the heart out, be there one to find ;
 And corners in't where store of pleasures lodge,

*The language an
 imitation of
 Chatterbox*

*For Thomas Paines
 the country*

We never dream'd were there ! It is to dwell
 'Mid smiles that are not neighbours to deceit ;
 Music, whose melody is of the heart ;
 And gifts, that are not made for interest,
 Abundantly bestow'd by nature's cheek,
 And voice, and hand ! It is to live on life,
 And husband it ! It is to constant scan
 The handiwork of Heaven ! It is to con
 Its mercy, bounty, wisdom, power ! It is
 To nearer see our God !

Julia. How like he talks
 To Master Walter !—Nay, no country life
 For thee ! Thou wouldst not live one half a year !
 A quarter mightst thou for the novelty
 Of fields and trees ; but then it needs must be
 In summer time, when they go dress'd.

Clif. Not it !
 In any time—say winter ! Fields and trees
 Have charms for me in very winter time !

Julia. But snow may clothe them then.

Clif. I like them full
 As well in snow !

Julia. You do ?

Clif. I do.

Julia. But night
 Will hide both snow and them, and that sets in
 Ere afternoon's well out. A heavy thing,
 A country fireside in a winter's night,
 To one bred in the town ; where winter's said,
 For sun of gaiety and sportiveness,
 To beggar shining summer !

Clif. I should like
 A country winter's night especially !

Julia. You'd sleep by the fire !

Clif. Not I ; I'd talk to thee !

Julia. You'd tire of that !

Clif. I'd read to thee !

Julia. And that !

Clif. I'd talk to thee again !

Julia. And sooner tire

Than first you did, and fall asleep at last !
 You'd never do to lead a country life.

Clif. You deal too harshly with me ! Matchless maid,
 As loved instructor brightens dullest wit,
 Fear not to undertake the charge of me !
 A willing pupil kneels to thee, and lays
 His title and his fortune at your feet.

Julia. His title and his fortune !

*Enter MASTER WALTER and HELEN.—JULIA, disconcerted,
 retires with the latter.—CLIFFORD rises.*

Wal. So, Sir Thomas !

12
 Clifford's answer to
 her is to be loved as
 a lover & the
 country or
 not.

Aha! you husband time! Well, was I right?
 Is't not the jewel that I told you 'twas?
 Wouldst thou not give thine eyes to wear it? Eh?
 It has an owner though.—Nay, start not,—one
 That may be brought to part with't, and with whom
 I'll stand thy friend—I will—I say, I will!
 A strange man, sir, and unaccountable:
 But I can humour him—will humour him
 For thy sake, good Sir Thomas; for I like thee.
 Well, is't a bargain? Come, thy hand upon it.
 A word or two with thee.

[*They retire. JULIA and HELEN come forward.*]

Julia. Go up to town!

Helen. Have I not said it ten times o'er to thee?
 But if thou likest it not, protest against it.

Julia. Not if 'tis Master Walter's will.

Helen. What then?

Thou wouldst not break thy heart for Master Walter?

Julia. That follows not!

Helen. What follows not?

Julia. That I

Should break my heart, because we go to town!

Helen. Indeed?—O that's another matter. Well,
 I'd e'en advise thee then to do his will;
 And, ever after, when I prophesy,
 Believe me, *Julia*!

[*They retire. MASTER WALTER comes forward.*]

Enter FATHOM.

Fath. So please you, sir, a letter,—a post-haste letter! The
 bearer on horseback, the horse in a foam—smoking like a
 boiler at the heat—be sure a post-haste letter!

Wal. Look to the horse and rider. [*Opens the letter, and reads.*]
 What's this? A testament address'd to me,
 Found in his lordship's escrutoire, and thence
 Directed to be taken by no hand
 But mine!—My presence instantly required!

[*SIR THOMAS, JULIA, and HELEN come forward.*]

Come, my mistresses,

You dine in town to-day. Your father's will

It is, my *Julia*, that you see the world;

And thou shalt see it in its best attire.

Its gayest looks—its richest finery

It shall put on for thee, that thou mayst judge

Betwixt it, and this rural life you've lived.

Business of moment I'm but just advised of,

Touching the will of my late noble master,

The Earl of Rochdale, recently deceased,

Commands me for a time to leave thee there.

Sir Thomas, hand her to the chariot. Nay,

I tell thee true. We go indeed to town!

[*They go out.*]

Thos. Eighteen, Master Fathom, by the rule of addition.

Fath. And how many times more will make twenty?

Thos. Twice, by the same rule.

Fath. Thou hast worked with thy pencil and slate, Master Thomas! Well, ten times, as I said, took I back the gown for the trimmings; and was she content after all? I warrant you no, or my ears did not pay for it. She wished, she said, that the slattern sempstress had not touched the gown; for nought had she done, but botched it. Now what think you had the sempstress done to the gown?

Thos. To surmise that, I must be learned in the sempstress's art.

Fath. The sempstress's art! Thou hast hit it! Oh, the sweet sempstress! The excellent sempstress! Mistress of her scissors and needles, which are pointless and edgeless to her art! The sempstress had done nothing to the gown; yet raves and storms my mistress at her, for having botched it in the making and altering; and orders her, straight, to make another one; which home the sempstress brings on Tuesday last.

Thos. And found thy fair mistress as many faults with that?

Fath. Not one! She finds it a very pattern of a gown! A well-sitting flounce! The sleeves a fit—the tucker a fit—the trimmings her fancy to a T—ha! ha! ha! and she praises the sempstress—ha! ha! ha! and she smiles at me, and I smile—ha! ha! ha! and the sempstress smiles—ha! ha! ha! Now why did the sempstress smile?

Thos. That she had succeeded so well in her art.

Fath. Thou hast hit it again! The jade must have been born a sempstress! If ever I marry, she shall work for my wife. The gown was the same gown! and there was my mistress's twentieth mood!

Thos. What think you will Master Walter say when he comes back? I fear he'll hardly know his country maid again. Has she yet fixed her wedding-day?

Fath. She has, Master Thomas. I coaxed it from her maid. She marries, Monday week.

Thos. Comes not Master Walter back to-day?

Fath. Your master expects him. [*A ringing.*] Perhaps that's he. I prithee go and open the door; do, Master Thomas, do; for proves it my master, he'll surely question me.

Thos. And what should I do?

Fath. Answer him, Master Thomas, and make him none the wiser. He'll go mad, when he learns how my lady flaunts it! Go! open the door, I prithee. Fifty things, Master Thomas, know you, for one thing that I know! You can turn and twist a matter into any other kind of matter; and then twist and turn it back again, if needs be; so much you servants of the town beat us of the country, Master Thomas. Open the door, now; do, Master Thomas, do! [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*A Garden with two Arbours.*

Enter MASTER HEARTWELL and MASTER WALTER, meeting.

Heart. Good Master Walter, welcome back again!

Wal. I'm glad to see you, Master Heartwell!

Heart. How,

I pray you, sped the weighty business which

So sudden call'd you hence?

Wal. Weighty, indeed!

What thou wouldst ne'er expect—wilt scarce believe!

Long-hidden wrong, wondrously come to light,

And great right done! But more of this, anon.

Now of my ward discourse! Likes she the town?

How does she? Is she well? Canst match me her,

Amongst your city maids?

Heart. Nor court ones neither!

She far outstrips them all!

Wal. I knew she would!

What else could follow in a maid so bred?

A pure mind, Master Heartwell!—not a taint

From intercourse with the distemper'd town;

With which all contact was wall'd out, until,

Matured in soundness, I could trust her to it,

Secure against infection!

Heart. Master Walter!

Wal. Well?

Heart. Tell me, prithee, which is likelier

To plough a sea in safety?—he that's wont

To sail in it,—or he that by the chart

Is master of its soundings, bearings,—knows

Its headlands, havens, currents—where 'tis bold,

And where behoves to keep a good look-out?

The one will swim, where drowns the other one!

Wal. The drift of this?

Heart. Do you not guess it?

Wal. Humph!

Heart. If you would train a maid to live in town,

Breed her not in the country!

Wal. Say you so!

And stands she not the test?

Heart. As snow stands fire!

Your country maid has melted all away,

And plays the city lady to the height;—

Her mornings gives to mercers, milliners,

Shoemakers, jewellers, and haberdashers;

Her noons, to calls; her afternoons, to dressing;

Evenings, to plays and drums; and nights, to routs,

Balls, masquerades! Sleep only ends the riot,

Which waking still begins!

Wal. I'm all amaze!

How bears Sir Thomas this?

Heart. Why, patiently;
Though one can see with pain.

Wal. She loves him? Ha! *[Aside.]*
That shrug is doubt! She'd ne'er consent to wed him
Unless she loved him!—never! Her young fancy
The pleasures of the town—new things—have caught;
Anon their hold will slacken; she'll become
Her former self again; to its old train
Of sober feelings will her heart return;
And then she'll give it wholly to the man
Her virgin wishes chose!

Heart. Here comes Sir Thomas;
And with him Master Modus.

Wal. Let them pass:

I would not see him, till I speak with her.

[They retire into one of the arbours.]

Enter CLIFFORD and MODUS.

Clif. A dreadful question is it, when we love,
To ask if love's return'd! I fondly thought
Fair Julia's heart was mine—I doubt it now!
But once last night she danced with me, her hand,
To this gallant and that, engaged, as soon
As ask'd for! Maid that loved would scarce do this?
Nor visit we together as we used,
When first she came to town. She loves me less
Than once she did—or loves me not at all!

Mod. I'm little skill'd, Sir Thomas, in the world:
What mean you now to do?

Clif. Remonstrate with her;
Come to an understanding, and, at once,
If she repents her promise to be mine,
Absolve her from it—and say farewell to her!

Mod. Lo, then, your opportunity—She comes—
My cousin also:—her will I engage,
Whilst you converse together.

Clif. Nay, not yet!
My heart turns coward at the sight of her!
Stay till it finds new courage! Let them pass.

[CLIFFORD and MODUS retire into the other arbour.]

Enter JULIA and HELEN.

Helen. So, Monday week will say good morn to thee,
A maid, and bid good night a sober wife!

Julia. That Monday week, I trust, will never come,
That brags to make a sober wife of me!

Helen. How changed you are, my Julia!

Julia. Change breeds change!

Helen. Why wedd'st thou then?

Julia. Because I promised him!

Helen. Thou lov'st him?

Julia. Do I?

Helen. He's a man to love!
A right well-favour'd man!

Julia. Your point's well-favour'd.
Where did you purchase it? In Gracechurch-street?

Helen. Pshaw! never mind my point, but talk of him.

Julia. I'd rather talk with thee about the lace.
Where bought you it? In Gracechurch-street, Cheapside,
Whitechapel, Little Britain? Can't you say
Where 'twas you bought the lace?

Helen. In Cheapside, then.
And now then to Sir Thomas! He is just
The height I like a man.

Julia. Thy feather's just
The height I like a feather! Mine's too short!
What shall I give thee in exchange for it?

Helen. What shall I give thee for a minute's talk
About Sir Thomas?

Julia. Why, thy feather.

Helen. Take it!
And now let's talk about Sir Thomas—Much
He loves you.

Julia. Much indeed, he has a right!
Those know I who would give their eyes to be
Sir Thomas, for my sake!

Helen. Such too, know I.
But 'mong them none that can compare with him,
Not one so graceful.

Julia. What a graceful set
Your feather has!

Helen. Nay, give it back to me,
Unless you pay me for't.

Julia. What wert to get?

Helen. A minute's talk with thee about Sir Thomas.

Julia. Talk of his title, and his fortune then.

Clif. [*Aside.*] Indeed! I would not listen, yet I must!

Julia. An ample fortune, Helen—I shall be
A happy wife! What routs, what balls, what masques,
What gala days!

Clif. [*Aside.*] For these she marries me!
She'll talk of these!

Julia. Think not, when I am wed,
I'll keep the house as owlet does her tower,
Alone,—when every other bird's on wing.
I'll use my palfrey, Helen; and my coach;
My barge too for excursion on the Thames:
What drives to Barnet, Hackney, Islington!
What rides to Epping, Hounslow, and Blackheath!
What sails to Greenwich, Woolwich, Fulham, Kew!
I'll set a pattern to your lady wives!

Clif. [*Aside.*] Ay, lady? Trust me, not at my expense.

Julia. And what a wardrobe! I'll have change of suits,
For every day in the year! and sets for days!

My morning dress, my noon dress, dinner dress,
And evening dress ! Then will I show you lace
A foot deep, can I purchase it : if not,
I'll specially bespeak it. Diamonds too !
Not buckles, rings and ear-rings only,—but
Whole necklaces and stomachers of gems !
I'll shine ! be sure I will.

Clif. [*Aside.*] Then shine away ;

Who covets thee my wear thee !—I'm not he !

Julia. And then my title ! Soon as I put on
The ring, I'm Lady Clifford. So I take
Precedence of plain mistress, were she e'en
The richest heiress in the land ! At town
Or country ball, you'll see me take the lead,
While wives that carry on their backs the wealth
To dower a princess, shall give place to me ;—
Will I not profit, think you, by my right ?
Be sure I will ! Marriage shall prove to me
A never-ending pageant. Every day
Shall show how I am spoused ! I will be known
For Lady Clifford all the city through,
And fifty miles the country round about.
Wife of Sir Thomas Clifford, baronet,—
Not perishable knight—who, when he makes
A lady of me, doubtless must expect
To see me play the part of one.

Clif. [*Coming forward.*] Most true ;
But not the part which you design to play.

Julia. A list'ner, sir !

Clif. By chance, and not intent !
Your speech was forced upon mine ear, that ne'er
More thankless duty to my heart discharged !
Would for that heart it ne'er had known the sense
Which tells it 'tis a bankrupt, there, where most
It coveted to be rich, and thought it was so !
O Julia ! is it you ? Could I have set
A coronet upon that stately brow,
Where partial nature hath already bound
A brighter circlet—radiant beauty's own—
I had been proud to see thee proud of it ;
So for the donor thou hadst ta'en the gift,
Not for the gift ta'en him. Could I have pour'd
The wealth of richest Cræsus in thy lap,
I had been blest to see thee scatter it ;
So I was still thy riches paramount !

Julia. Know you me, sir !

Clif. I do !—On Monday week

We were to wed ;—and are—so you're content,
The day that wives, you to be widow'd. Take
The privilege of my wife ; be Lady Clifford !
Outshine thy title in the wearing on't !
My coffers, lands, all are at thy command !

Wear all ! but, for myself, she wears not me,
Although the coveted of every eye,
Who would not wear me for myself alone.

Julia. And do you carry it so proudly, sir ?

Clif. Proudly, but still more sorrowfully, lady !
I'll lead thee to the church on Monday week.
Till then, farewell !—and then, farewell for ever !
O Julia, I have ventured for thy love,
Like the bold merchant, who, for only hope
Of some rich gain, all former gains will risk !
Before I ask'd a portion of thy heart,
I perill'd all my own ; and now, all's lost !

[*CLIFFORD and MODUS go out.*]

Julia. Helen !

Helen. What ails you, sweet ?

Julia. I cannot breathe—quick, loose my girdle, oh !

[*Faints.*]

MASTER *WALTER* and MASTER *HEARTWELL* come forward.

Wal. Good Master Heartwell, help to take her in,
Whilst I make after him ! and look to her !
Unlucky chance that took me out of town !

[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE III.—*The Street.*

Enter CLIFFORD and STEPHEN, meeting.

Ste. Letters, Sir Thomas.

Clif. Take them home again,
I shall not read them now.

Ste. Your pardon, sir,
But here is one directed strangely.

Clif. How ?

Ste. "To Master Clifford, gentleman, now styled
Sir Thomas Clifford, baronet."

Clif. Indeed !

Whence comes that letter ?

Ste. From abroad.

Clif. Which is it ?

Ste. So please you this, Sir Thomas.

Clif. Give it me.

Ste. That letter brings not news to wish him joy upon. If
he was disturbed before—which I guessed by his looks he was
—he is not more at ease now. His hand to his head ! A most
unwelcome letter ! If it brings him news of disaster, fortune
does not give him his deserts ; for never waited servant upon
a kinder master.

Clif. Stephen !

Ste. Sir Thomas !

Clif. From my door remove
The plate that bears my name.

Ste. The plate, Sir Thomas!

Clif. The plate—collect my servants and instruct them
To make out, each, their claims unto the end
Of their respective terms, and give them in
To my steward. Him and them apprise, good fellow,
That I keep house no more. As you go home,
Call at my coachmaker's and bid him stop
The carriage I bespoke. The one I have
Send with my horses to the mart, whereat
Such things are sold by auction. They're for sale—
Pack up my wardrobe—have my trunks convey'd
To the inn in the next street—and when that's done,
Go round my tradesmen and collect their bills,
And bring them to me, at the inn.

Ste. The inn!

Clif. Yes; I go home no more! Why what's the matter?
What has fallen out to make your eyes fill up?
You'll get another place. I'll certify you
Most honest and industrious, and all
That servant ought to be.

Ste. I see, Sir Thomas;
Some great misfortune has befallen you?

Clif. No!

I have health; I have strength; my reason, Stephen, and
A heart that's clear in truth, with trust in God!

No great disaster can befall the man

Who's still possess'd of these! Good fellow, leave me.

What you would learn, and have a right to know,

I would not tell you now.—Good Stephen, hence!

Mischance has fallen on me—but what of that?

Mischance has fallen on many a better man.

I prithee leave me. I grow sadder while

I see the eye, with which you view my grief.

'Sdeath, they will out! I would have play'd the man,

Had you been less a kind and gentle one.

Now, as you love me, leave me!

Ste. Never master

(So well deserved the love of him that served him!

[STEPHEN goes out.]

Clif. Misfortune liketh company! it seldom
Visits its friends alone! Ha, Master Walter,
And ruffled too! I'm in no mood for him.

Enter MASTER WALTER.

Wal. So, Sir—Sir Thomas Clifford!—You are found!

Clif. Well, Master Walter?

Wal. You're a rash young man, sir!

Strong-headed, and wrong-headed—and I fear, sir,
Not over delicate in that fine sense

Which men of honour pride themselves upon!

Clif. Well, Master Walter?

Wal. A young woman's heart, sir,

*The Victorian
idea of the
repetition of
wealth
Also the
idea of sudden unexpected
loss coming falling from
as does sudden gain
Clif. then setting
in Vanity*

*appear
and
feel
servant
idea*

Is not a stone to carve a posy on !
 Which knows not what is writ on't—which you may buy,
 Exchange, or sell, sir,—keep or give away, sir :
 It is a richer—yet a poorer thing ;
 Priceless to him that owns and prizes it ;
 Worthless, when own'd, not prized ! which makes the man
 That covets it, obtains it, and discards it,—
 A fool, if not a villain, sir !

[Half drawing, then returning his sword.]

Clif. Well, sir !

Wal. You never loved my ward, sir !

Clif. The bright Heavens

Bear witness that I did !

Wal. The bright Heavens, sir,

Bear not false witness ! That you loved her not,
 Is clear,—for had you loved her, you'd have pluck'd
 Your heart from out your breast, ere cast her from your heart !
 Old as I am, I know what passion is, sir !
 We are wrong'd, sir, wrong'd !

Clif. Nay, listen, Master Walter,
 Touching your ward, if wrong is done, I think
 On my side lies the grievance—I would not say so,
 Did I not know so !—As for love !—look, sir,
 That hand 's a widower's, to its first choice sworn
 To clasp no second one ! As for amends, sir,
 You're free to get them from a man in whom
 You've been forestall'd by fortune. Please you read
 That letter. Now, sir, judge if life is dear,
 To one, so much a loser.

Wal. What, all gone !

Thy cousin living they reported dead !

Clif. Title and land, sir, unto which add love !
 All gone, save life—and honour !—which ere I'll lose,
 I'll let the other go.

Wal. We're public here,
 And may be interrupted. Let us seek
 Some spot of privacy. Your letter, sir. *[Gives it back.]*
 Though fortune slights you, I'll not slight you ! Not
 Your title or the lack of it I heed !

Whether upon the score of love or hate,
 With you and you alone I settle, sir.
 We've gone too far. 'Twere folly now to part
 Without a reckoning.

Clif. Just as you please.

Wal. You've done

A noble lady wrong !

Clif. That lady, sir,

Has done me wrong !

Wal. Go to, thou art a boy !—
 Fit to be trusted with a plaything, not
 A woman's heart. Thou know'st not what it is !
 And that I'll prove to thee, soon as we find

Convenient place. Come on, sir!—You shall get
 A lesson that shall serve you for the rest
 Of your life. I'll make you own her, sir, a piece
 Of Nature's handiwork, as costly, free
 From bias, flaw, and fair, as ever yet
 Her cunning hand turn'd out. Come on, sir!—Come!
[They go out.]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Drawing Room.*

Enter LORD TINSEL and the EARL OF ROCHDALE.

Tin. Refuse a lord! A saucy lady this.
 I scarce can credit it.

Roch. She'll change her mind.

My agent, Master Walter, is her guardian.

Tin. How can you keep that Hunchback in his office?
 He mocks you!

Roch. He is useful. Never heed him.

My offer now do I present through him.

He has the title-deeds of my estates,

She'll listen to their wooing. I must have her.

Not that I love her, but that all allow

She's fairest of the fair.

Tin. Distinguish'd well!

'Twere most unseemly for a lord to love!—

Leave that to commoners! 'Tis vulgar—she's
 Betroth'd, you tell me, to Sir Thomas Clifford?

Roch. Yes.

Tin. That a commoner should thwart a lord!

Yet not a commoner. A baronet

Is fish and flesh. Nine parts plebeian, and

Patrician in the tenth. Sir Thomas Clifford!

A man, they say, of brains! I abhor brains

As I do tools: They're things mechanical.

So far are we above our forefathers:—

They to their brains did owe their titles, as

Do lawyers, doctors. We to nothing owe them,

Which makes us far the nobler.

Roch. Is it so?

Tin. Believe me. You shall profit by my training;

You grow a lord apace. I saw you meet

A bevy of your former friends, who fain

Had shaken hands with you. You gave them fingers!

You're now another man. Your house is changed,—

Your table changed—your retinue—your horse—

name suggest character

*plot
the name*

*12 woman
married because
she is a sister
symbol*

*12
the upper classes
cannot love. appropriate
that it is saved
to Lord Tinsel*

*12
mechanical
are also said
of intelligent
(cf. G. H. Hardy's
Barnes Grange
But Cranley
An old
Barnes house)*

Where once you rode a hack, you now back blood;—
Befits it, then, you also change your friends!

Enter WILLIAMS.

Will. A gentleman would see your lordship.

Tin. Sir!

What's that?

Will. A gentleman would see his lordship.

Tin. How know you, sir, his lordship is at home?

Is he at home because he goes not out?

He's not at home, though there you see him, sir;

Unless he certify that he's at home!

Bring up the name of the gentleman, and then

Your lord will know if he's at home or not.

[WILLIAMS goes out.]

Your man was porter to some merchant's door,

Who never taught him better breeding

Than to speak the vulgar truth! Well, sir?

WILLIAMS having re-entered.

Will. His name,

So please your lordship, is Markham.

Tin. Do you know

The thing?

Roch. Right well! I' faith a hearty fellow,
Son to a worthy tradesman, who would do
Great things with little means; so enter'd him
In the Temple. A good fellow, on my life,
Nought smacking of his stock!

Tin. You've said enough!

His lordship's not at home. [WILLIAMS goes out.]

not go

By hearts, but orders! Had he family—

Blood—though it only were a drop—his heart

Would pass for something; lacking such desert,

Were it ten times the heart it is, 'tis nought!

Enter WILLIAMS.

Will. One Master Jones hath ask'd to see your lordship.

Tin. And what was your reply to Master Jones?

Will. I knew not if his lordship was at home.

Tin. You'll do. Who's Master Jones?

Roch. A curate's son.

Tin. A curate's! Better be a yeoman's son!

Were it the rector's son, he might be known;

Because the rector is a rising man,

And may become a bishop. He goes light.

The curate ever hath a loaded back!

He may be call'd the yeoman of the church,

That sweating does his work, and drudges on;

While lives the hopeful rector at his ease.

How made you his acquaintance, pray?

good
humor
volunt
big
held
cheese
Name
Hf
Note him
Lord's time
keller
Moor
W

Roch. We read
Latin and Greek together.

Tin. Dropping them—

As, now that you're a lord, of course you've done—
Drop him—You'll say his lordship's not at home.

Will. So please your lordship, I forgot to say,
One Richard Cricket likewise is below.

Tin. Who?—Richard Cricket! You must see him, Roch-
dale!

A noble little fellow! A great man, sir!
Not knowing whom, you would be nobody!
I won five thousand pounds by him!

Roch. Who is he?
I never heard of him.

Tin. What! never heard
Of Richard Cricket!—Never heard of him!
Why, he's the jockey of Newmarket! You
May win a cup by him, or else a sweepstakes!
I bade him call upon you. You must see him.
His lordship is at home to Richard Cricket.

Roch. Bid him wait in the ante-room. [WILLIAMS goes out.]

Tin. The ante-room?

The best room in your house! You do not know
The use of Richard Cricket! Show him, sir,
Into the drawing-room. Your lordship needs
Must keep a racing-stud, and you'll do well
To make a friend of Richard Cricket. [WILLIAMS re-enters.]

Well, sir?

Will. So please your lordship, a petition.

Tin. What!

Hadst not a service 'mongst the Hottentots
Ere thou camest hither, friend? Present thy lord
With a petition! At mechanics' doors,
At tradesmen's, shopkeepers', and merchants' only,
Have such things leave to knock! Make thy lord's gate
A wicket to a workhouse! Let us see it—
Subscriptions to a book of poetry!
Who heads the list?—Cornelius Tense, A.M.
Which means he construes Greek and Latin, works
Problems in mathematics, can chop logic,
And is a conjurer in philosophy,
Both natural and moral.—Pshaw! a man
Whom nobody, that is anybody, knows!
Who, think you, follows him? Why, an M.D.,
An F.R.S., an F.A.S., and then
A D.D., Doctor of Divinity,
Ushering in an LL.D., which means
Doctor of Laws—their union here, no doubt,
The difference of their trades! There's nothing here
But languages, and sciences, and arts!
Not an iota of nobility!
We cannot give our names. Take back the paper,

*And I think is a
hypocrite. He will
not stirle with
his infernal
sly wherry money
and all the money
of the game
mean-*

And tell the bearer there's no answer for him :—
That is the lordly way of saying "No."
But talking of subscriptions, here is one
To which your lordship may affix your name.

Roch. Pray, who's the object?

Tin. A most worthy man!

A man of singular deserts! a man

In serving whom your lordship will serve me,—
Signor Cantata.

Roch. He's a friend of yours?

Tin. O, no, I know him not! I've not that pleasure.
But Lady Dangle knows him; she's his friend.

He will oblige us with a set of concerts,
Six concerts to the set.—The set, three guineas.
Your lordship will subscribe?

Roch. O, by all means!

Tin. How many sets of tickets? Two at least.
You'll like to take a friend? I'll set you down
Six guineas to Signor Cantata's concerts.

And now, my Lord, we'll to him; then we'll walk.

Roch. Nay, I would wait the lady's answer.

Tin. Wait!

Take an excursion to the country! Let
Her answer wait for you!

Roch. Indeed!

Tin. Indeed!

Befits a lord nought like indifference.

Say an estate should fall to you, you'd take it,

As it concernéd more a stander by.

Than you! As you're a lord, be sure you ever

Make light of that, which other men make much of;

Nor do the thing they do, but the right contrary.

Where the distinction else 'twixt them and you? [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*An Apartment in Master Heartwell's House.*

MASTER WALTER *discovered looking through title-deeds and papers.*

Wal. So falls out everything, as I would have it,

Exact in place and time! This lord's advances

Receives she,—as, I augur, in the spleen

Of wounded pride she will,—my course is clear.

She comes—All's well! The tempest rages still!

JULIA enters, and paces the room in a state of high excitement.

Julia. What have my eyes to do with water? Fire

Becomes them better!

Wal. True!

Julia. Yet, must I weep.

To be so monitor'd, and by a man!—

A man that was my slave! whom I have seen

Kneel at my feet from morn till noon, content
 With leave to only gaze upon my face,
 And tell me what he read there,—till the page
 I knew by heart, I 'gan to doubt I knew,
 Emblazon'd by the comment of his tongue!
 And he to lesson me! Let him come here
 On Monday week; he ne'er leads me to church!
 I would not profit by his rank, or wealth,
 Though kings might call him cousin, for their sake!
 I'll show him I have pride!

Wal. You're very right!

Julia. He would have had to-day our wedding-day!
 I fix'd a month from this. He pray'd and pray'd;
 I dropp'd a week. He pray'd and pray'd the more!
 I dropp'd a second one. Still more he pray'd!
 And I took off another week,—and now
 I have his leave to wed, or not to wed!
 He'll see that I have pride!

Wal. And so he ought.

Julia. O! for some way to bring him to my foot!
 But he should lie there! Why, 'twill go abroad
 That he has cast me off.—That there should live
 The man could say so!—Or that I should live
 To be the leavings of a man!

Wal. Thy case
 I own a hard one!

Julia. Hard? 'Twill drive me mad!
 His wealth and title!—I refused a lord—
 I did!—that privily implored my hand,
 And never cared to tell him on't! So much
 I hate him now, that lord should not in vain
 Implore my hand again!

Wal. You'd give it him?

Julia. I would.

Wal. You'd wed that lord?

Julia. That lord I'd wed;—
 Or any other lord,—only to show him
 That I could wed above him!

Wal. Give me your hand
 And word to that.

Julia. There! Take my hand and word!

Wal. That lord hath offer'd you his hand again.

Julia. He has?

Wal. Your father knows it, and approves of him.
 There are the title-deeds of the estates,
 Sent for my jealous scrutiny. All sound,—
 No flaw, or speck, that e'en the lynx-eyed law
 Itself could find. A lord of many lands!
 In Berkshire half a county; and the same
 In Wiltshire, and in Lancashire! Across
 The Irish Sea a principality!
 And not a rood with bond or lien on it!

Wilt give that lord a wife? Wilt make thyself
A countess? Here's the proffer of his hand.
Write thou content, and wear a coronet!

Julia. [*Eagerly.*] Give me the paper!

Wal. There! Here's pen and ink.

Sit down. Why do you pause? A flourish of
The pen, and you're a countess!

Julia. My poor brain

Whirls round and round! I would not wed him now,
Were he more lowly at my feet to sue
Than e'er he did!

Wal. Wed whom?

Julia. Sir Thomas Clifford!

Wal. You're right.

Julia. His rank and wealth are roots to doubt;
And while they lasted, still the weed would grow,
Howe'er you pluck'd it.—No! That's o'er—That's done.
Was never lady wrong'd so foul as I! [*Weeps.*]

Wal. Thou'rt to be pitied.

Julia. [*Aroused.*] Pitied! Not so bad
As that!

Wal. Indeed thou art, to love the man
That spurns thee!

Julia. Love him!—Love! If hate could find
A word more harsh than its own name, I'd take it,
To speak the love I bear him! [*Weeps.*]

Wal. Write thy own name,
And prove how near akin thy hate's to hate.

Julia. [*Writes.*] 'Tis done!

Wal. 'Tis well! I'll come to you anon! [*Goes out.*]

Julia [*alone*]. I'm glad 'tis done! I'm very glad 'tis done!
I've done the thing I ought. From my disgrace
This lord shall lift me 'bove the reach of scorn—
That idly wags its tongue, where wealth and state
Need only beckon to have crowds to laud!
Then how the tables change! The hand he spurn'd
His betters take! Let me remember that!
I'll grace my rank! I will! I'll carry it
As I was born to it! I warrant none
Shall say it fits me not:—but, one and all
Confess I wear it bravely, as I ought!
And he shall hear it! Ay, and he shall see it!
I shall roll by him in an equipage
Would mortgage his estate—but he shall own
His slight of me was my advancement! Love me!
He never loved me! if he had, he ne'er
Had given me up! Love's not a spider's web
But fit to mesh a fly—that you can break
By only blowing on't! He never loved me!
He knows not what love is!—or, if he does,
He has not been o'er chary of his peace!
And that he'll find when I'm another's wife.

Lost!—lost to him for ever! Tears again!
 Why should I weep for him? Who make their woes,
 Deserve them! What have I to do with tears?

Enter HELEN.

Helen. News, Julia, news!

Julia. What! is't about Sir Thomas?

Helen. Sir Thomas, say you? He's no more Sir Thomas!
 That cousin lives, as heir to whom, his wealth
 And title came to him.

Julia. Was he not dead?

Helen. No more than I am dead.

Julia. I would 'twere not so.

Helen. What say you, Julia?

Julia. Nothing.

Helen. I could kiss

That cousin! couldn't you, Julia?

Julia. Wherefore?

Helen. Why

For coming back to life again, as 'twere
 Upon his cousin to revenge you.

Julia. Helen!

Helen. Indeed 'tis true. With what a sorry grace
 The gentleman will bear himself without
 His title! Master Clifford! Have you not
 Some token to return him? some love-letter?
 Some brooch? some pin? some anything? I'll be
 Your messenger, for nothing but the pleasure
 Of calling him plain "Master Clifford."

Julia. Helen!

Helen. Or has he aught of thine? Write to him, Julia,
 Demanding it! Do, Julia, if you love me;
 And I'll direct it in a schoolboy's hand,
 As round as I can write, "To Master Clifford."

Julia. Helen!

Helen. I'll think of fifty thousand ways
 To mortify him! I've a cousin, Julia,
 A care-for-nought, at mischief. Him I'll set
 With twenty other madcaps like himself,
 To walk the streets the traitor most frequents,
 And give him salutation as he passes—
 "How do you, Master Clifford?"

Julia. [*Highly incensed.*] Helen!

Helen. Bless me!

Julia. I hate you, Helen!

Enter MODUS.

Mod. Joy for you, fair lady!
 Our baronet is now plain gentleman—
 And hardly that, not master of the means
 To bear himself as such. The kinsman lives
 Whose only rumour'd death gave wealth to him,

*Julia is apparently
 in love with
 Clifford*

*Knives, but
 don't the female ask
 why night to
 a post.*

And title. A hard creditor he proves,
Who keeps strict reckoning—will have interest,
As well as principal. A ruin'd man
Is now Sir Thomas Clifford!

Helen. I am glad on't.

Mod. And so am I. A scurvy trick it was
He served you, madam. Use a lady so!
I merely bore with him. I never liked him.

Helen. No more did I. No, never could I think
He look'd his title.

Mod. No, nor acted it.

If rightly they report, he ne'er disbursed
To entertain his friends, 'tis broadly said,
A hundred pounds in the year! He was most poor
In the appointments of a man of rank,
Possessing wealth like his. His horses, hacks!
His gentleman a footman! and his footman,
A groom! The sports, that men of quality
And spirit countenance, he kept aloof from;
From scruple of economy, not taste,—
As racing and the like. In brief, he lack'd
Those shining points that, more than name, denote
High breeding; and, moreover, was a man
Of very shallow learning.

Julia. Silence, sir!

For shame!

Helen. Why, Julia!

Julia. Speak not to me! [Turning to MODUS.] Poor!

Most poor! I tell you, sir, he was the making
Of fifty gentlemen—each one of whom
Were more than peer for thee! His title, sir,
Lent him no grace he did not pay it back!
Though it had been the highest of the high,
He would have look'd it, felt it, acted it,
As thou couldst ne'er have done! When found you out
You liked him not? It was not ere to-day!
Or that base spirit I must reckon yours
Which smiles where it would scowl—can stoop to hate
And fear to show it! He was your better, sir,
And is!—Ay, is! though stripp'd of rank and wealth,
His nature 'bove or fortune's love or spite,
To blazon or to blur it!

Mod. [To HELEN.] I was told

Much to disparage him—I know not wherefore.

Helen. And so was I, and know as much the cause.

Enter MASTER WALTER, with parchments.

Wal. Joy, my Julia! Give you joy, my girl!
Impatient love has foresight! Lo you here
The marriage-deeds fill'd up, except a blank
To write your jointure. What you will, my Julia!
Is this a lover? Look! Three thousand pounds

Knowles
author shows
in the way in
which he
handles events
to support
our expectations.
Each we find
Julia act out
the character when
she is with
her lover.
Now she suddenly
defends
Thomas
Clifford whom
she is in love
with after
abandoning
him.
We are charged
with the influence
and the love of
Julia with the latter
is due to recognition
that a woman
is not to be taken
by her angry
words about
some one
loves.

elementary
the moral
the play

off but we think
it is
hypocrisy and
she married
him because
of love
but
what
was
she
saying

Walter's
scheme is
just his
good

Per annum for your private charges! Ha! There's pin-money! Is this a lover? What acres, forests, tenements, are tax'd For your revenue; and so set apart, That finger cannot touch them, save thine own. Is this a lover? What good fortune's thine! Thou dost not speak; but, 'tis the way with joy! With richest heart, it has the poorest tongue!

Mod. What great good fortune's this you speak of, sir?

Wal. A coronet, Master Modus! You behold The wife elect, sir, of no less a man Than the new Earl of Rochdale—heir of him That's recently deceased.

Helen. My dearest Julia, Much joy to you!

Mod. All good attend you, madam!

Wal. This letter brings excuses from his lordship, Whose absence it accounts for. He repairs To his estate in Lancashire, and thither We follow.

Julia. When, sir?

Wal. Now. This very hour.

Julia. This very hour! O cruel, fatal haste!

Wal. "O cruel, fatal haste!" What meanest thou?

Have I done wrong to do thy bidding, then?

I have done no more. Thou wast an off-cast bride, And wouldst be an affianced one—Thou art so! Thou'dst have the slight that mark'd thee out for scorn, Converted to a means of gracing thee— It is so! If our wishes come too soon, What can make sure of welcome? In my zeal To win thee thine, thou know'st, at any time! I'd play the steed, whose will to serve his lord, With his last breath gives his last bound for him! Since only noon have I despatch'd what well Had kept a brace of clerks, and more, on foot,— And then, perhaps, had been to do again!— Not finish'd sure, complete—the compact firm, As fate itself had seal'd it!

Julia. Give you thanks!

Wal. Take thy lord's letter! Well?

Enter THOMAS, with a letter.

Thos. This letter, sir, The gentleman that served Sir Thomas Clifford— Or him that was Sir Thomas—gave to me For Mistress Julia.

Julia. Give it me! *[Throwing away the one she holds.]*

Wal. *[Snatching it.]* For what? Wouldst read it? He's a bankrupt! stripp'd of title, House, chattels, lands, and all! A naked bankrupt, With neither purse, nor trust! Wouldst read his letter?

A beggar! Yea, a very beggar!—fasts,
Unless he dines on alms! To send thee letter!
I burst with choler! Thus I treat his letter!

[Tears and throws it on the ground.]

So! I was wrong to let him ruffle me;
He is not worth the spending anger on!
I prithee, Master Modus, use despatch,
And presently make ready for our ride.
You, Helen, to my Julia look—a change
Of dresses will suffice. She must have new ones,
Matches for her new state! Haste, friends. My Julia!
Why stand you poring there upon the ground?
Time flies. Your rise astounds you? Never heed—
You'll play my lady countess like a queen! *[They go out.]*

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the Earl of Rochdale's.*

Enter HELEN.

Helen. I'm weary wandering from room to room;
A castle after all is but a house—
The dullest one when lacking company.
Were I at home, I could be company
Unto myself. I see not Master Walter.
He's ever with his ward. I see not her.
By Master Walter will she bide, alone.
My father stops in town. I can't see him.
My cousin makes his books his company.
I'll go to bed and sleep. No—I'll stay up
And plague my cousin into making love!
For, that he loves me, shrewdly I suspect.
How dull he is, that hath not sense to see
What lies before him, and he'd like to find!
I'll change my treatment of him. Cross him, where
Before I used to humour him. He comes,
Poring upon a book. What's that you read?

Enter MODUS.

Mod. Latin, sweet cousin.

Helen. 'Tis a naughty tongue,
I fear, and teaches men to lie.

Mod. To lie!

Helen. You study it. You call your cousin sweet,
And treat her as you would a crab. As sour
'Twould seem you think her, so you covet her!

Why how the monster stares, and looks about !
You construe Latin, and can't construe that !

Mod. I never studied women.

Helen. No ; nor men.

Else would you better know their ways : nor read

In presence of a lady. [*Strikes the book from his hand.*]

Mod. Right you say,

And well you served me, cousin, so to strike

The volume from my hand. I own my fault ;

So please you may I pick it up again ?

I'll put it in my pocket !

Helen. Pick it up.

He fears me as I were his grandmother !

What is the book ?

Mod. 'Tis Ovid's Art of Love.

Helen. That Ovid was a fool !

Mod. In what ?

Helen. In that :

To call that thing an art, which art is none.

Mod. And is not love an art ?

Helen. Are you a fool,

As well as Ovid ? Love an art ! No art

But taketh time and pains to learn. Love comes

With neither ! Is't to hoard such grain as that,

You went to college ? Better stay at home,

And study homely English !

Mod. Nay, you know not

The argument.

Helen. I don't ? I know it better

Than ever Ovid did ! The face,—the form,—

The heart,—the mind we fancy, cousin ; that's

The argument ! Why, cousin, you know nothing !

Suppose a lady were in love with thee,

Couldst thou by Ovid, cousin, find it out ?

Couldst find it out, wert thou in love, thyself ?

Could Ovid, cousin, teach thee to make love ?

I could, that never read him ! You begin

With melancholy ; then to sadness ; then

To sickness ; then to dying—but not die !

She would not let thee, were she of my mind !

She'd take compassion on thee. Then for hope ;

From hope to confidence ; from confidence

To boldness ;—then you'd speak ; at first entreat ;

Then urge ; then flout ; then argue ; then enforce ;

Make prisoner of her hand ; besiege her waist ;

Threaten her lips with storming ; keep thy word

And carry her ! My sampler 'gainst thy Ovid !

Why cousin, are you frighten'd, that you stand

As you were stricken dumb ? The case is clear,

You are no soldier ! You'll ne'er win a battle.

You care too much for blows !

Mod. You wrong me there.

At school I was the champion of my form;
And since I went to college——

Helen. That for college!

Mod. Nay, hear me!

Helen. Well? What, since you went to college?
You know what men are set down for, who boast
Of their own bravery! Go on, brave cousin:
What, since you went to college? Was there not
One Quentin Halworth there? You know there was,
And that he was your master!

Mod. He my master?

Thrice was he worsted by me!

Helen. Still was he!
Your master.

Mod. He allow'd I had the best!
Allow'd it, mark me! nor to me alone,
But twenty I could name.

Helen. And master'd you
At last! Confess it, cousin, 'tis the truth!
A proctor's daughter you did both affect—
Look at me and deny it!—Of the twain
She more affected you;—I've caught you now,
Bold cousin! Mark you? opportunity
On opportunity she gave you, sir,—
Deny it if you can!—but though to others,
When you discoursed of her, you were a flame;
To her you were a wick that would not light,
Though held in the very fire! And so he won her—
Won her, because he woo'd her like a man;
For all your cuffings, cuffing you again
With most usurious interest! Now, sir,
Protest that you are valiant!

Mod. Cousin Helen!

Helen. Well, sir?

Mod. The tale is all a forgery!

Helen. A forgery!

Mod. From first to last; ne'er spoke I
To a proctor's daughter, while I was at college.

Helen. Well, 'twas a scrivener's then—or somebody's.
But what concerns it whose? Enough, you loved her!
And, shame upon you, let another take her!

Mod. Cousin, I tell you, if you'll only hear me,
I loved no woman while I was at college—
Save one, and her I fancied ere I went there.

Helen. Indeed! Now I'll retreat, if he's advancing.
Comes he not on! O what a stock's the man!
Well, cousin?

Mod. Well! What more wouldst have me say?
I think, I've said enough.

Helen. And so think I.
I did but jest with you. You are not angry?
Shake hands! Why, cousin, do you squeeze me so?

Mod. [*Letting her go.*] I swear I squeezed you not!

Helen. You did not?

Mod. No,

May I die if I did!

Helen. Why then you did not, cousin,
So let's shake hands again—[*He takes her hand as before.*]
O go! and now

Read Ovid! Cousin, will you tell me one thing:

Wore lovers ruffs in master Ovid's time?

Behoved him teach them, then, to put them on;—

And that you have to learn. Hold up your head!

Why, cousin, how you blush! Plague on the ruff!

I cannot give't a set. You're blushing still!

Why do you blush, dear cousin? So!—'twill beat me!

I'll give it up.

Mod. Nay, prithee don't—try on!

Helen. And if I do, I fear you'll think me bold.

Mod. For what?

Helen. To trust my face so near to thine.

Mod. I know not what you mean!

Helen. I'm glad you don't!

Cousin, I own right well-behaved you are,

Most marvellously well-behaved! They've bred

You well at college. With another man

My lips would be in danger! Hang the ruff!

Mod. Nay, give it up, nor plague thyself, dear cousin.

Helen. Dear fool! [*Throws the ruff on the ground.*]

I swear the ruff is good for just

As little as its master! There!—'Tis spoil'd—

You'll have to get another! Hie for it,

And wear it in the fashion of a wisp,

Ere I adjust it for thee! Farewell, cousin!

You'd need to study Ovid's Art of Love! [*HELEN goes out.*]

Mod. [*solus*]. Went she in anger! I will follow her,—

No, I will not! Heigho! I love my cousin!

O would that she loved me! Why did she taunt me

With backwardness in love? What could she mean?

Sees she I love her, and so laughs at me,

Because I lack the front to woo her? Nay,

I'll woo her then! Her lips shall be in danger,

When next she trusts them near me! Look'd she at me

To-day, as never did she look before!

A bold heart, Master Modus! 'Tis a saying,

A faint one never won fair lady yet!

I'll woo my cousin, come what will on't. Yes;

[*Begins reading again, throws down the book.*]

Hang Ovid's Art of Love! I'll woo my cousin! [*Goes out.*]

SCENE II.—*The Banqueting-room in the Earl of Rochdale's Mansion.*

Enter MASTER WALTER and JULIA.

Wal. This is the banqueting-room. Thou see'st as far
It leaves the last behind, as that excels
The former ones. All is proportion here
And harmony! Observe! The massy pillars
May well look proud to bear the gilded dome.
You mark those full-length portraits? They're the heads,
The stately heads, of his ancestral line.
Here o'er the feast they haply still preside!
Mark those medallions! Stand they forth or not
In bold and fair relief? Is not this brave?

Julia. [*Abstractedly.*] It is.

Wal. It should be so. To cheer the blood
That flows in noble veins is made the feast
That gladdens here! You see this drapery?
'Tis richest velvet! Fringe and tassels, gold!
Is not this costly?

Julia. Yes.

Wal. And chaste, the while?
Both chaste and costly?

Julia. Yes.

Wal. Come hither! There's a mirror for you. See!
One sheet from floor to ceiling! Look into it,
Salute its mistress! Dost not know her?

Julia. [*Sighing deeply.*] Yes!

Wal. And sighest thou to know her? Wait until
To-morrow, when the banquet shall be spread
In the fair hall; the guests—already bid,
Around it; here, her lord; and there, herself;
Presiding o'er the cheer that hails him bridegroom,
And her the happy bride! Dost hear me?

Julia. [*Sighing still more deeply.*] Yes.

Wal. These are the day-rooms only, we have seen,
For public and domestic uses kept.
I'll show you now the lodging-rooms.

[*Goes, then turns and observes JULIA standing perfectly abstracted.*]

You're tired.

Let it be till after dinner then. Yet one
I'd like thee much to see—the bridal chamber.

[*JULIA starts, crosses her hands upon her breast, and looks upwards.*]

I see you're tired: yet it is worth the viewing,
If only for the tapestry which shows
The needle like the pencil glows with life;

[*Brings down chairs,—they sit.*]

The story's of a page who loved the dame
He served—a princess!—Love's a heedless thing!

That never takes account of obstacles ;
 Makes plains of mountains, rivulets of seas,
 That part it from its wish. So proved the page,
 Who from a state so lowly, look'd so high ;—
 But love's a greater lackwit still than this.
 Say it aspires—that's gain ! Love stoops—that's loss !
 You know what comes. The princess loved the page.
 Shall I go on, or here leave off ?

Julia. Go on.

Wal. Each side of the chamber shows a different stage
 Of this fond page, and fonder lady's love.*

First—no, it is not that.

Julia. Oh, recollect !

Wal. And yet it is.

Julia. No doubt it is. What is't ?

Wal. He holds to her a salver, with a cup,
 Which, fraught with wine, his heart, o'erfraught with love,
 Doth mock ; as speak his looks ! She heeds him not,
 For too great heed of him :—but seems to hold
 Debate betwixt her passion and her pride—
 That's like to lose the day. You read it in
 Her vacant eye, knit brow, and parted lips,
 Which speak a heart too busy all within
 To note what's done without. Like you the tale ?

Julia. I list to every word.

Wal. The next side paints
 The page upon his knee. He has told his tale ;
 And found that when he lost his heart, he play'd
 No losing game ; but won a richer one !
 There may you read in him, how love would seem
 Most humble when most bold,—you question which
 Appears to kiss her hand—his breath or lips !
 In her you read how wholly lost is she
 Who loves beneath herself ! Shall I give o'er ?

Julia. Nay, tell it to the end. Is't melancholy ?

Wal. To answer that, would mar the story.

Julia. Right.

Wal. The third side now we come to.

* In representation, the passages following this are curtailed—
 and the scene runs as follows :—Master Walter continues—

The first side shows their passion in the dawn—

In the next side 'tis shining open day—

In the third there's clouding—I but touch on these

To make a long tale brief, and bring thee to

The last side.

Julia. What shows that ?

Wal. The fate of love

That will not be advised.—The scene's a dungeon,
 Its tenant is the page—he lies in fetters.

Julia. Hard !

Hard as the steel, the hands that put them on ! &c.

Julia. What shows that?

Wal. The page and princess still. But stands her sire
Between them. Stern he grasps his daughter's arm,
Whose eyes like fountains play; while through her tears
Her passion shines, as through the fountain-drops,
The sun! His minions crowd around the page!
They drag him to a dungeon.

Julia. Hapless youth!

Wal. Hapless indeed, that's twice a captive! heart
And body both in bonds. But that's the chain,
Which balance cannot weigh, rule measure, touch
Define the texture of, or eye detect,
That's forged by the subtle craft of love!
No need to tell you that he wears it. Such
The cunning of the hand that plied the loom,
You've but to mark the straining of his eye,
To feel the coil yourself!

Julia. I feel't without!

You've finish'd with the third side; now the fourth!

Wal. It brings us to a dungeon, then.

Julia. The page,
The thrall of love, more than the dungeon's thrall,
Is there?

Wal. He is. He lies in fetters.

Julia. Hard!

Hard as the steel the hands that put them on.

Wal. Some one unrivets them!

Julia. The princess? 'Tis!

Wal. It is another page.

Julia. It is herself!

Wal. Her skin is fair; and his is berry-brown.
His locks are raven black; and hers are gold.

Julia. Love's cunning in disguises! Spite of locks,
Skin, vesture,—it is she, and only she!

What will not constant woman do for love
That's loved with constancy! Set her the task,
Virtue approving, that will baffle her!
O'ertax her stooping, patience, courage, wit!
My life upon it, 'tis the princess' self,
Transform'd into a page!

Wal. The dungeon door
Stands open, and you see beyond——

Julia. Her father!

Wal. No; a steed.

Julia. [Starting up.] O, welcome steed,
My heart bounds at the thought of thee! Thou comest
To bear the page from bonds to liberty.
What else?

Wal. [Rising.] The story's told.

Julia. Too briefly told;
O happy princess, that had wealth and state
To lay them down for love! Whose constant love

Appearances approved, not falsified!

A winner in thy cost, as well as gain.

Wal. Weighs love so much?

Julia. What would you weigh 'gainst love

That's true? Tell me with what you'd turn the scale?

Yea, make the index waver? Wealth?—A feather!

Rank?—Tinsel against bullion in the balance!

The love of kindred?—That to set 'gainst love!

Friendship comes nearest to't; but put love in,

And friendship kicks the beam!—Weigh nothing 'gainst it!

Weigh love against the world!

Yet are they happy that have nought to say to it.

Wal. And such a one art thou. Who wisely wed,

Wed happily. The love thou speak'st of,

A flower is only, that its season has,

Which they must look to see the withering of,

Who pleasure in its budding and its bloom!

But wisdom is the constant evergreen

Which lives the whole year through! Be that your flower!

Enter a Servant.

Well?

Serv. My lord's secretary is without.

He brings a letter for her ladyship,

And craves admittance to her.

Wal. Show him in.

Julia. No.

Wal. Thou must see him. To show slight to him,

Were slighting him that sent him. Show him in!

[*Servant goes out.*]

Some errand proper for thy private ear,

Besides the letter he may bring. What mean

This paleness and this trembling? Mark me, Julia!

If, from these nuptials, which thyself invited—

Which at thy seeking came—thou wouldst be freed;

Thou hast gone too far! Receding were disgrace,

Sooner than see thee suffer which, the hearts

That love thee most, would wish thee dead! Reflect!

Take thought! Collect thyself! With dignity

Receive thy bridegroom's messenger! for sure

As dawns to-morrow's sun, to-morrow night

Sees thee a wedded bride!

[*Goes out*]

Julia [alone]. A wedded bride!

Is it a dream? Is it a phantasm? 'Tis

Too horrible for reality! for aught else

Too palpable! O would it were a dream!

How would I bless the sun that waked me from it!

I perish! Like some desperate mariner

Impatient of a strange and hostile shore,

Who rashly hoists his sail and puts to sea,

And being fast on reefs and quicksands borne,

Essays in vain once more to make the land,

The name is ironical
used here

The elevation
of love
an emotion
lacking
in
Victorian
society

Whence wind and current drive him; I'm wreck'd
 By mine own act! What! no escape? no hope?
 None! I must e'en abide these hated nuptials!
 Hated!—Ah! own it, and then curse thyself!
 That madest the bane thou loathest—for the love
 Thou bear'st to one who never can be thine!
 Yes—love! Deceive thyself no longer. False
 To say 'tis pity for his fall,—respect,
 Engender'd by a hollow world's disdain,
 Which hoots when fickle fortune cheers no more!
 'Tis none of these: 'tis love—and if not love,
 Why then idolatry! Ay, that's the name
 To speak the broadest, deepest, strongest passion,
 That ever woman's heart was borne away by!
 He comes! Thou'dst play the lady,—play it now!

*Enter a Servant, conducting CLIFFORD, plainly attired as the
 EARL OF ROCHDALE'S Secretary.*

Servant. His lordship's secretary. [Servant goes out.]

Julia. Speaks he not?

Or does he wait for orders to unfold
 His business? Stopp'd his business till I spoke,
 I'd hold my peace for ever!

[CLIFFORD kneels; presenting a letter.]

Does he kneel?

A lady am I to my heart's content!
 Could he unmake me that which claims his knee,
 I'd kneel to him,—I would! I would!—Your will?

Clif. This letter from my lord.

Julia. O fate! who speaks?

Clif. The secretary of my lord.

Julia. I breathe!

I could have sworn 'twas he!

[Makes an effort to look at him, but is unable.]

So like the voice—

I dare not look, lest there the form should stand!

How came he by that voice? 'Tis Clifford's voice,

If ever Clifford spoke! My fears come back—

Clifford the secretary of my lord!

Fortune hath freaks, but none so mad as that!

It cannot be!—It should not be!—A look,

And all were set at rest. [Tries to look at him again, but cannot.]

So strong my fears,

Dread to confirm them takes away the power

To try and end them! Come the worst, I'll look!

[She tries again; and again is unequal to the task.]

I'd sink before him if I met his eye!

Clif. Will't please your ladyship to take the letter?

Julia. There Clifford speaks again! Not Clifford's heart

Could more make Clifford's voice! Not Clifford's tongue

And lips more frame it into Clifford's speech!

A question, and 'tis over! Know I you?

Clif. Reverse of fortune, lady, changes friends;
It turns them into strangers. What I am
I have not always been!

Julia. Could I not name you?

Clif. If your disdain for one, perhaps too bold
When hollow fortune call'd him favourite,—
Now by her fickleness perforce reduced

To play an humbler part, would suffer you—

Julia. I might?

Clif. You might!

Julia. Oh, Clifford! is it you?

Clif. Your answer to my lord.

[*Gives the letter.*]

Julia. Your lord!

[*Mechanically taking it.*]

Clif. Wilt write it?

Or, will it please you send a verbal one?

I'll bear it faithfully.

Julia. You'll bear it?

Clif. Madam,

Your pardon, but my haste is somewhat urgent.

My lord's impatient, and to use despatch

Were his repeated orders.

Julia. Orders? Well,

I'll read the letter, sir. 'Tis right you mind

His lordship's orders. They are paramount!

Nothing should supersede them!—stand beside them!

They merit all your care, and have it! Fit,

Most fit they should! Give me the letter, sir.

Clif. You have it, madam.

Julia. So! How poor a thing

I look! so lost, while he is all himself!

Have I no pride? [*She rings, the Servant enters.*]

Paper, and pen, and ink!

If he can freeze, 'tis time that I grow cold!

I'll read the letter.

[*Opens it, and holds it as about to read it.*]

Mind his orders! So!

Quickly he fits his habits to his fortunes!

He serves my lord with all his will! His heart's

In his vocation. So! Is this the letter?

'Tis upside down—and here I'm poring on't!

Most fit I let him see me play the fool!

Shame. Let me be myself!

[*A Servant enters with materials for writing.*]

A table, sir,

And chair.

[*The Servant brings a table and chair, and goes out.*]

*She sits awhile, vacantly gazing on the letter—then
looks at CLIFFORD.*

How plainly shows his humble suit!

It fits not him that wears it! I have wrong'd him!

He can't be happy—does not look it!—is not.

That eye which reads the ground is argument

Enough! He loves me. There I let him stand,
And I am sitting!

[Rises, takes a chair, and approaches CLIFFORD.]

Pray you take a chair.

[He bows, as acknowledging and declining the honour.]

She looks at him awhile.

Clifford, why don't you speak to me?

[She weeps.]

Clif. I trust

You're happy.

Julia. Happy! Very, very happy!

You see I weep, I am so happy! Tears

Are signs, you know, of nought but happiness!

When first I saw you, little did I look

To be so happy!—Clifford!

Clif. Madam?

Julia. Madam!

I call thee Clifford, and thou call'st me madam!

Clif. Such the address my duty stints me to.

Thou art the wife elect of a proud earl,

Whose humble secretary, now, am I.

Julia. Most right! I had forgot! I thank you, sir,

For so reminding me; and give you joy,

That what, I see, had been a burthen to you,

Is fairly off your hands.

Clif. A burthen to me!

Mean you yourself? Are you that burthen, Julia?

Say that the sun's a burthen to the earth!

Say that the blood's a burthen to the heart!

Say health's a burthen, peace, contentment, joy,

Fame, riches, honours! everything that man

Desires, and gives the name of blessing to!—

E'en such a burthen, Julia were to me,

Had fortune let me wear her.

Julia. *[Aside.]* On the brink

Of what a precipice I'm standing! Back,

Back! while the faculty remains to do't!

A minute longer, not the whirlpool's self

More sure to suck me down! One effort! There!

[She returns to her seat, recovers her self-possession, takes up the letter, and reads.]

To wed to-morrow night! Wed whom? A man

Whom I can never love! I should before

Have thought of that! To-morrow night! This hour

To-morrow! How I tremble! Happy bands

To which my heart such freezing welcome gives,

As sends an ague through me! At what means

Will not the desperate snatch! What's honour's price?

Nor friends, nor lovers,—no, nor life itself!

Clifford! This moment leave me!

[CLIFFORD retires up the stage out of JULIA's sight.]

Is he gone!

O docile lover! Do his mistress' wish

That went against his own! Do it so soon!—
 Ere well 'twas utter'd! No good-bye to her!
 No word! No look! 'Twere best that he so went!
 Alas, the strait of her, who owns that best,
 Which last she'd wish were done? What's left me now?
To weep!—To weep!

[Leans her head upon her arm, which rests upon the desk,—her other arm hanging listlessly at her side. CLIFFORD comes down the stage, looks a moment at her, approaches her, and kneeling, takes her hand.]

Clif. My Julia!

Julia. Here again!

Up! up! By all thy hopes of Heaven go hence!
 To stay's perdition to me! Look you, Clifford!
 Were there a grave where thou art kneeling now,
 I'd walk into't, and be inearth'd alive,
 Ere taint should touch my name! Should some one come
 And see thee kneeling thus! Let go my hand!
 Remember, Clifford, I'm a promised bride—
 And take thy arm away! It has no right
 To clasp my waist! Judge you so poorly of me,
 As think I'll suffer this? My honour, sir!

[She breaks from him, quitting her seat.]

I'm glad you've forced me to respect myself—
 You'll find that I can do so!

Clif. I was bold—

Forgetful of your station and my own;
 There was a time I held your hand unchid!
 There was a time I might have clasp'd your waist—
 I had forgot that time was past and gone!
 I pray you, pardon me!

Julia *[softened]*. I do so, Clifford.

Clif. I shall no more offend.

Julia. Make sure of that.

No longer is it fit thou keep'st thy post
 In's lordship's household. Give it up! A day—
 An hour remain not in it!

Clif. Wherefore?

Julia. Live

In the same house with me, and I another's?
 Put miles, put leagues between us! The same land
 Should not contain us. Oceans should divide us—
 With barriers of constant tempests—such
 As mariners durst not tempt! O Clifford!
 Rash was the act so light that gave me up,
 That stung a woman's pride, and drove her mad—
 Till in her frenzy she destroy'd her peace!
 Oh, it was rashly done! Had you reproved—
 Expostulated,—had you reason'd with me—
 Tried to find out what was indeed my heart,—
 I would have shown it—you'd have seen it. All
 Then would have been as nought can be again!

Clif. Lovest thou me, Julia?

Julia. Dost thou ask me, Clifford?

Clif. These nuptials may be shunn'd!—

Julia. With honour?

Clif. Yes!

Julia. Then take me!—Stop—hear me, and take me then!

Let not thy passion be my counsellor!

Deal with me, Clifford, as my brother. Be

The jealous guardian of my spotless name!

Scan thou my cause as 'twere thy sister's. Let

Thy scrutiny o'erlook no point of it,—

Nor turn it over once, but many a time:—

That flaw, speck,—yea—the shade of one,—a soil

So slight, not one out of a thousand eyes

Could find it out, may not escape thee; then

Say if these nuptials can be shunn'd with honour!

Clif. They can.

Julia. Then take me, Clifford!

[*They embrace.*]

Wal. [*Entering.*] Ha! What's this?

Ha! treason! What! my baronet that was,

My secretary now? Your servant, sir!

What's here?—a letter. Fifty crowns to one

A forgery! I'm wrong. It is his hand.

This proves thee double traitor!

Clif. Traitor!

Julia. Nay,

Control thy wrath, good Master Walter! Do,—

And I'll persuade him to go hence—[*MASTER WALTER retires up the stage.*] I see

For me thou bearest this, and thank thee, Clifford!

As thou hast truly shown thy heart to me,

So truly I to thee have open'd mine!

Time flies! To-morrow! If thy love can find

A way, such as thou said'st, for my enlargement,

By any means thou canst, apprise me of it;

And, soon as shown, I'll take it.

Wal. Is he gone?

Julia. He is this moment. If thou covet'st me,

Win me, and wear me! May I trust thee? Oh!

If that's thy soul, that's looking through thine eyes,

Thou lovest me, and I may!—I sicken, lest

I never see thee more!

Clif. As life is mine,

The ring that on thy wedding finger goes

No hand but mine shall place there!

Wal. Lingers he?

Julia. For my sake, now away! And yet a word.

By all thy hopes most dear, be true to me!

Go now!—yet stay!—Clifford, while you are here,

I'm like a bark distress'd and compassless,

That by a beacon steers; when you're away,

That bark alone, and tossing miles at sea!

Now go! Farewell! My compass—beacon—land!
When shall my eyes be bless'd with thee again!

Clif. Farewell!

[*Goes out.*]

Julia. Art gone! All's chance—All's care—All's darkness!

[*Is led off by MASTER WALTER.*]

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Earl of Rochdale's.*

Enter HELEN and FATHOM.

Fath. The long and the short of it is this—if she marries this lord, she'll break her heart! I wish you could see her, madam. Poor lady!

Helen. How looks she, prithee?

Fath. Marry, for all the world like a dripping-wet cambric handkerchief! She has no colour nor strength in her; and does nothing but weep—Poor lady!

Helen. Tell me again what said she to thee?

Fath. She offered me all she was mistress of, to take the letter to Master Clifford. She drew her purse from her pocket—the ring from her finger—she took her very ear-rings out of her ears—but I was forbidden, and refused. And now I'm sorry for it! Poor lady!

Helen. Thou *shouldst* be sorry. Thou hast a hard heart, Fathom.

Fath. I, madam! My heart is as soft as a woman's. You should have seen me when I came out of her chamber—Poor lady!

Helen. Did you cry?

Fath. No; but I was as near it as possible. I a hard heart!

I would do anything to serve her! Poor sweet lady!

Helen. Will you take her letter, asks she you again?

Fath. No—I am forbid.

Helen. Will you help Master Clifford to an interview with her?

Fath. No—Master Walter would find it out.

Helen. Will you contrive to get me into her chamber?

Fath. No—You would be sure to bring me into mischief.

Helen. Go to! You would do nothing to serve her. You a soft heart! You have no heart at all! You feel not for her!

Fath. But I tell you I do—and good right I have to feel for her. I have been in love myself.

Helen. With your dinner!

Fath. I would it had been! My pain would soon have been over, and at little cost. A fortune I squandered upon her!—trinkets—trimmings—treatings—what swallowed up the

revenue of a whole year! Wasn't I in love? Six months I courted her, and a dozen crowns all but one did I disburse for her in that time! Wasn't I in love? An hostler—a tapster—and a constable, courted her at the same time; and I offered to cudgel the whole three of them for her! Wasn't I in love?

Helen. You are a valiant man, Fathom.

Fath. Am not I? Walks not the earth the man I am afraid of.

Helen. Fear you not Master Walter?

Fath. No.

Helen. You do!

Fath. I don't!

Helen. I'll prove it to you. You see him breaking your young mistress's heart, and have not the manhood to stand by her.

Fath. What could I do for her?

Helen. Let her out of prison. It were the act of a man.

Fath. That man am I!

Helen. Well said, brave Fathom!

Fath. But my place!—

Helen. I'll provide thee with a better one!

Fath. 'Tis a capital place! So little to do, and so much to get for't. Six pounds in the year; two suits of livery; shoes and stockings, and a famous larder! He'd be a bold man that would put such a place in jeopardy. My place, Madam, my place!

Helen. I tell thee I'll provide thee with a better place. Thou shalt have less to do, and more to get. Now, Fathom, hast thou courage to stand by thy mistress?

Fath. I have!

Helen. That's right.

Fath. I'll let my lady out.

Enter MASTER WALTER unperceived.

Helen. That's right. When, Fathom?

Fath. To-night.

Helen. She is to be married to-night.

Fath. This evening then. Master Walter is now in the library, the key is on the outside, and I'll lock him in.

Helen. Excellent! You'll do it?

Fath. Rely upon it. How he'll stare when he finds himself a prisoner, and my young lady at liberty!

Helen. Most excellent! You'll be sure to do it?

Fath. Depend upon me! When Fathom undertakes a thing, he defies fire and water—

Wal. [Coming forward.] Fathom!

Fath. Sir!

Wal. Assemble straight the servants.

Fath. Yes, sir!

Wal. Mind,

And have them in the hall when I come down.

Fath. Yes, sir!

Wal. And see you do not stir a step
But where I order you.

Fath. Not an inch, sir!

Wal. See that you don't—away! So, my fair mistress,

[*FATHOM goes out.*]

What's this you have been plotting? An escape
For mistress Julia?

Helen. I avow it.

Wal. Do you?

Helen. Yes; and moreover to your face I tell you,
Most hardly do you use her!

Wal. Verily!

Helen. I wonder where's her spirit! Had she mine,
She would not take't so easily. Do you mean
To force this marriage on her?

Wal. With your leave.

Helen. You laugh.

Wal. Without it then. I don't laugh now.

Helen. If I were she, I'd find a way to escape.

Wal. What would you do?

Helen. I'd leap out of the window!

Wal. Your window should be barr'd.

Helen. I'd cheat you still!

I'd hang myself ere I'd be forced to marry!

Wal. Well said! You shall be married, then, to-night!

Helen. Married to-night!

Wal. As sure as I have said it.

Helen. Two words to that. Pray who's to be my bride-
groom?

Wal. A daughter's husband is her father's choice.

Helen. My father's daughter ne'er shall wed such husband!

Wal. Indeed!

Helen. I'll pick a husband for myself.

Wal. Indeed!

Helen. Indeed, sir; and indeed again!

Wal. Go dress you for the marriage ceremony.

Helen. But, Master Walter, what is it you mean?

Enter *MODUS.*

Wal. Here comes your cousin;—he shall be your brides-
man!

The thought's a sudden one,—that will excuse
Defect in your appointments. A plain dress,—
So 'tis of white,—will do.

Helen. I'll dress in black.

I'll quit the castle.

Wal. That you shall not do.

Its doors are guarded by my lord's domestics,
Its avenues—its grounds. What you must do,
Do with a good grace! In an hour, or less,
Your father will be here. Make up your mind

To take with thankfulness the man he gives you.

[Now, *Aside*] if they find not out how beat their hearts,
I have no skill, not I, in feeling pulses. *[Goes out.]*

Helen. Why, cousin Modus! What! will you stand by

And see me forced to marry? Cousin Modus!

Have you not got a tongue? Have you not eyes?

Do you not see I'm very—very ill,

And not a chair in all the corridor?

Mod. I'll find one in the study.

Helen. Hang the study!

Mod. My room's at hand. I'll fetch one thence.

Helen. You shan't!

I'd faint ere you came back!

Mod. What shall I do?

Helen. Why don't you offer to support me? Well?

Give me your arm—be quick! *[MODUS offers his arm.]*

Is that the way

To help a lady when she's like to faint?

I'll drop unless you catch me! *[MODUS supports her.]*

That will do.

I'm better now—*[MODUS offers to leave her]* don't leave me!

Is one well

Because one's better? Hold my hand. Keep so.

I'll soon recover, so you move not. Loves he— *[Aside.]*

Which I'll be sworn he does, he'll own it now!

Well, cousin Modus?

Mod. Well, sweet cousin!

Helen. Well?

You heard what Master Walter said?

Mod. I did.

Helen. And would you have me marry? Can't you speak?

Say yes or no.

Mod. No, cousin!

Helen. Bravely said!

And why, my gallant cousin?

Mod. Why?

Helen. Ay, why?—

Women, you know, are fond of reasons—Why

Would you not have me marry? How you blush!

Is it because you do not know the reason?

You mind me of a story of a cousin

Who once her cousin such a question ask'd—

He had not been to college though—for books,

Had pass'd his time in reading ladies' eyes,

Which he could construe marvellously well,

Though writ in language all symbolical.

Thus stood they once together, on a day—

As we stand now—discours'd as we discourse,—

But with this difference,—fifty gentle words

He spoke to her, for one she spoke to him!—

What a dear cousin! Well, as I was saying,

As now I question'd thee, she question'd him.

And what was his reply? To think of it
Sets my heart beating—'Twas so kind a one!
So like a cousin's answer—a dear cousin!
A gentle, honest, gallant, loving cousin!
What did he say?—A man might find it out,
Though never read he Ovid's Art of Love—
What did he say? He'd marry her himself!
How stupid are you, cousin! Let me go!

Mod. You are not well yet?

Helen. Yes.

Mod. I'm sure you're not!

Helen. I'm sure I am.

Mod. Nay, let me hold you, cousin!

I like it.

Helen. Do you? I would wager you
You could not tell me why you like it. Well?
You see how true I know you! How you stare!

What see you in my face to wonder at?

Mod. A pair of eyes!

Helen. At last he'll find his tongue— [Aside.

And saw you ne'er a pair of eyes before?

Mod. Not such a pair.

Helen. And why?

Mod. They are so bright!

You have a Grecian nose.

Helen. Indeed!

Mod. Indeed!

Helen. What kind of mouth have I?

Mod. A handsome one.

I never saw so sweet a pair of lips!

I ne'er saw lips at all till now, dear cousin!

Helen. Cousin, I'm well,—You need not hold me now.

Do you not hear? I tell you I am well!

I need your arm no longer—take't away!

So tight it locks me, 'tis with pain I breathe!

Let me go, cousin! Wherefore do you hold

Your face so close to mine? What do you mean?

Mod. You've question'd me, and now I'll question you.

Helen. What would you learn?

Mod. The use of lips.

Helen. To speak.

Mod. Nought else?

Helen. How bold my modest cousin grows!

Why, other use know you?

Mod. I do!

Helen. Indeed!

You're wondrous wise? And pray what is it?

Mod. This!

[Attempts to kiss her.

Helen. Soft! my hand thanks you, cousin—for my lips,

I keep them for a husband!—Nay, stand off!

I'll not be held in manacles again!

Why do you follow me?

Mod. I love you, cousin!

'Tis out at last.

[*Aside.*

Helen. You love me! Love me, cousin!
O cou'in, mean you so! That's passing strange!
Falls out most crossly—is a dire mishap—
A thing to sigh for, weep for, languish for,
And die for!

Mod. Die for!

Helen. Yes, with laughter, cousin,
For, cousin, I love you!

Mod. And you'll be mine?

Helen. I will.

Mod. Your hand upon it.

Helen. Hand and heart.

Hie to thy dressing-room, and I'll to mine—
Attire thee for the altar—so will I.

Whoe'er may claim me, thou'rt the man shall have me.

Away! Despatch! But hark you, ere you go,
Ne'er brag of reading Ovid's Art of Love!

Mod. And cousin! stop—One little word with you!

[*She returns, he snatches a kiss.—They go out severally.*

SCENE II.—*Julia's Chamber.*

Enter JULIA.

Julia. No word from him, and evening now set in!

He cannot play me false! His messenger

Is dogg'd—or letter intercepted. I'm

Beset with spies!—No rescue!—No escape!—

The hour at hand that brings my bridegroom here!

No relative to aid me! friend to counsel me.

[*A knock at the door.*

* Come in.

Enter two Female Attendants.

Your will?

First Attendant. Your toilet waits, my lady;

'Tis time you dress.

Julia. 'Tis time I die! [*A peal of bells.*] What's that?

First Attendant. Your wedding bells, my lady.

Julia. Merrily

They ring my knell! [*Second Attendant presents an open case.*

And pray you what are these?

Second Attendant. Your wedding jewels.

Julia. Set them by.

Second Attendant. Indeed

Was ne'er a braver set! A necklace, brooch,

* In the acting, what follows is omitted, until the line—"He that should guard me," &c.

And ear-rings all of brilliants, with a hoop
To guard your wedding ring.

Julia. 'Twould need a guard
That lacks a heart to keep it!

Second Attendant. Here's a heart
Suspended from the necklace—one huge diamond
Imbedded in a host of smaller ones!
Oh! how it sparkles!

Julia. Show it me! Bright heart,
Thy lustre, should I wear thee, will be false,—
For thou the emblem art of love and truth,—
From her that wears thee unto him that gives thee.
Back to thy case! Better thou ne'er shouldst leave it—
Better thy gems a thousand fathoms deep
In their native mine again, than grace my neck,
And lend thy fair face to palm off a lie!

First Attendant. Wilt please you dress?

Julia. Ah! in infected clothes
New from a pest-house! Leave me! If I dress,
I dress alone! O for a friend! Time gallops!

[Attendants go out.]

He that should guard me is mine enemy!
Constrains me to abide the fatal die,
My rashness, not my reason cast! He comes,
That will exact the forfeit!—Must I pay it?—
E'en at the cost of utter bankruptcy!
What's to be done? Pronounce the vow that parts
My body from my soul! To what it loathes
Links that, while this is link'd to what it loves!
Condemn'd to such perdition! What's to be done?
Stand at the altar in an hour from this!
An hour thence seated at his board—a wife
Thence!—frenzy's in the thought! What's to be done?

Enter MASTER WALTER.

Wal. What! run the waves so high? Not ready yet!
Your lord will soon be here! The guests collect.

Julia. Show me some way to 'scape these nuptials! Do it!
Some opening for avoidance or escape,—
Or to thy charge I'll lay a broken heart!
It may be, broken vows, and blasted honour!
Or else a mind distraught!

Wal. What's this?

Julia. The strait
I'm fallen into my patience cannot bear!
It frights my reason—warps my sense of virtue!
Religion!—changes me into a thing,
I look at with abhorring!

Wal. Listen to me.

Julia. Listen to me, and heed me! If this contract
Thou hold'st me to—abide thou the result!
Answer to heaven for what I suffer!—act!

Prepare thyself for such calamity
 To fall on me, and those whose evil stars
 Have link'd them with me, as no past mishap,
 However rare, and marvellously sad,
 Can parallel! lay thy account to live
 A smileless life, die an unpitied death—
 Abhorr'd, abandon'd of thy kind,—as one
 Who had the guarding of a young maid's peace,
 Look'd on and saw her rashly peril it;
 And when she saw her danger, and confess'd
 Her fault, compell'd her to complete her ruin!

Wal. Hast done?

Julia. Another moment, and I have.
 Be warn'd! Beware how you abandon me
 To myself! I'm young, rash, inexperienced! tempted
 By most insufferable misery!
 Bold, desperate, and reckless! Thou hast age,
 Experience, wisdom, and collectedness,—
 Power, freedom,—everything that I have not,
 Yet want, as none e'er wanted! Thou canst save me,
 Thou ought'st! thou must! I tell thee at his feet
 I'll fall a corpse—ere mount his bridal bed!
 So choose betwixt my rescue and my grave;—
 And quickly too! The hour of sacrifice
 Is near! Anon the immolating priest
 Will summon me! Devise some speedy means
 To cheat the altar of its victim. Do it!
 Nor leave the task to me!

Wal. Hast done?

Julia. I have.

Wal. Then list to me—and silently, if not
 With patience.— [*Brings chairs for himself and her.*]
 How I watch'd thee from thy childhood,
 I'll not recall to thee. Thy father's wisdom—
 Whose humble instrument I was—directed
 Your nonage should be pass'd in privacy,
 From your apt mind that far outstripp'd your years,
 Fearing the taint of an infected world;—
 For, in the rich ground, weeds once taking root,
 Grow strong as flowers—He might be right or wrong!
 I thought him right; and therefore did his bidding.
 Most certainly he loved you—so did I;
 Ay! well as I had been myself your father!

[*His hand is resting upon his knee, JULIA attempts to take it—he withdraws it—looks at her—she hangs her head.*]

Well; you may take my hand! I need not say
 How fast you grew in knowledge, and in goodness,—
 That hope could scarce enjoy its golden dreams
 So soon fulfilment realized them all!
 Enough. You came to womanhood. Your heart,
 Pure as the leaf of the consummate bud,

That's new unfolded by the smiling sun,
 And ne'er knew blight nor canker! When a good woman
 Is fitly mated, she grows doubly good,
 How good soe'er before! I found the man
 I thought a match for thee; and, soon as found,
 Proposed him to thee—'Twas your father's will,
 Occasion offering, you should be married
 Soon as you reach'd to womanhood.—You liked
 My choice—accepted him.—We came to town;
 Where, by important matter summon'd thence,
 I left you an affianced bride!

Julia. You did!

You did!

Wal. Nay, check thy tears! Let judgment now,
 Not passion, be awake. On my return,
 I found thee—what?—I'll not describe the thing
 I found thee then! I'll not describe my pangs
 To see thee such a thing! The engineer
 Who lays the last stone of his sea-built tower,
 It cost him years and years of toil to raise,—
 And, smiling at it, tells the winds and waves
 To roar and whistle now—but, in a night,
 Beholds the tempest sporting in its place—
 May look aghast, as I did!

Julia. [*Falling on her knees.*] Pardon me!

Forgive me! pity me!

Wal. Resume thy seat.

[*Raises her.*]

I pity thee; perhaps not thee alone
 It fits to sue for pardon.

Julia. Me alone!

None other! None!—O, none! But, Master Walter!
 These nuptials!—must they needs go on?

Servant. [*Entering.*] More guests
 Arrive.

Wal. Attend to them.

[*Servant goes out.*]

Julia. Dear Master Walter!

Is there no way to escape these nuptials?

Wal. Know'st not

What with these nuptials comes? Hast thou forgot?

Julia. What?

Wal. Nothing!—I did tell thee of a thing—

Julia. What was it?

Wal. To forget it was a fault!

Look back and think.

Julia. I can't remember it.

Wal. Fathers, make straws your children! Nature's
 nothing!

Blood nothing! Once in other veins it runs,
 It no more yearneth for the parent flood,
 Than doth the stream that from the source disparts.
 Talk not of love instinctive—What you call so
 Is but the brat of custom! Your own flesh

By habit cleaves to you—without,
Hath no adhesion! [*Aside.*] So; you have forgot
You have a father, and are here to meet him!

Julia. I'll not deny it.

Wal. You should blush for't.

Julia. No!

Nay, hear me, Master Walter! Nay, turn not from me!
For thou to me, except a father's name,
Hast all the father been: the care—the love—
The guidance—the protection of a father.
Canst wonder, then, if like thy child I feel,—
And feeling so, that father's claim forget
Whom ne'er I knew, save by the name of one?
Oh, turn to me, and do not chide me! or
If thou wilt chide, chide on! but turn to me!

Wal. [*Struggling with emotion.*] My Julia! [*Embraces her.*]

Julia. Now, dear Master Walter, hear me!

Is there no way to 'scape these nuptials?

Wal. Julia,

A promise made admits not of release,
Save by consent or forfeiture of those
Who hold it—so it should be ponder'd well
Before we let it go. Ere man should say
I broke the word I had the power to keep,
I'd lose the life I had the power to part with!
Remember, Julia, thou and I, to-day,
Must, to thy father, of thy training render
A strict account. While honour's left to us,
We have something—nothing, having all, but that.
Now for thy last act of obedience, Julia!
Present thyself before thy bridegroom! [*She assents.*] Good!
My Julia's now herself! Show him thy heart,
And to his honour leave't to set thee free
Or hold thee bound. Thy father will be by!
He comes!—Be firm!—Thy father will be by!

*Enter LORD ROCHDALE with LORD TINSEL and friends—
afterwards CLIFFORD.*

Roch. Is she not fair?

Tin. I scarce have seen her yet.

She'll do. Your servant, lady! Master Walter,
We're glad to see you. Sirs, you're welcome all.
What wait they for? Are we to wed or not?
We're ready—Why don't they present the bride?
I hope they know she is to wed an earl.

Roch. Should I speak first?

Tin. Not for your coronet!

I, as your friend, may make the first advance.
We've come here to be married. Where's the bride?

Wal. There stands she, lord. If 'tis her will to wed,
His lordship's free to take her.

Tin. Not a step!

I, as your friend, may lead her to your lordship.
Fair lady, by your leave.

Julia. No! not to you.

Tin. I ask your hand to give it to his lordship.

Julia. Nor to his lordship—save he will accept
My hand without my heart!

Tin. What means the girl!

Julia. What is't behoves a wife to bring her lord?

Wal. A whole heart, and a true one.

Julia. I have none!

Not half a heart—the fraction of a heart!

Am I a woman it befits to wed?

Wal. Why, where's thy heart?

Julia. Gone!—Out of my keeping!—

Lost, past recovery! Right and title to it—

And all given up! and he that's owner on't,

So fit to wear it, were it fifty hearts,

I'd give it to him all!

Wal. Thou dost not mean

His lordship's secretary?

Julia. Yes. Away

Disguises! In that secretary know

The master of the heart, of which, the poor,

Unvalued, empty casket, at your feet,—

Its jewel gone,—I now despairing throw! [*Kneels to WALTER.*]

Wal. Rise! Rise, my Julia!—Think!—You have a father

Tin. Lady, we came not here to treat of hearts,—

But marriage; which, so please you, is with us

A simple joining, by the priest, of hands.

A ring's put on; a prayer or two is said;

You're man and wife,—and nothing more! For hearts,

We oft'ner do without, than with them, lady!

Clif. So does not wed this lady!

Tin. Who are you?

Clif. The secretary to the Earl of Rochdale.

Tin. My lord!

Roch. I know him not—

Tin. I know him now—

Your lordship's rival! once Sir Thomas Clifford.

Clif. Yes, and the bridegroom of that lady then,

Then loved her—loves her still!

Julia. Was loved by her—

Though then she knew it not!—is loved by her,

As now she knows, and all the world may know!

Tin. We can't be laugh'd at. We are here to wed,

And shall fulfil our contract.

Julia. Clifford!

Clif. Julia!

You will not give your hand?

[*A pause—JULIA seems utterly lost.*]

Wal. You have forgot

Again. You have a father!

Julia. Bring him now,—
To see thy Julia justify thy training,
And lay her life down to redeem her word!

Wal. And so redeems her all!—Is it your will,
My lord, these nuptials should go on?

Roch. It is.

Wal. Then is it mine they stop!

Tin. I told your lordship

You should not keep a Hunchback for your agent.

Wal. Thought like my father, my good lord, who said
He would not have a Hunchback for his son,—
So do I pardon you the savage slight!
My lord, that I am not as straight as you,
Was blemish neither of my thought nor will,
My head nor heart. It was no act of mine,—
Yet did it curdle nature's kindly milk
E'en where 'tis richest—in a parent's breast—
To cast me out to heartless fosterage.
And give my portion to another! So!
But all's recover'd.

Look, my lord, a testament
To make a pension of his lordship's rent-roll!
It is my father's, and was left by him,
In case his heir should die without a son,
Then to be open'd. Heaven did send a son
To bless the heir. Heaven took its gift away.
He died—His father died. And Master Walter—
The unsightly agent of his lordship there—
The Hunchback whom your lordship would have stripp'd
Of his agency,—is now the Earl of Rochdale!

Julia. The Earl of Rochdale!

Wal. Ay! The Earl of Rochdale.

But what of that? Thou know'st not half my greatness!
A prouder title, Julia, have I yet.
Sooner than part with which I'd give that up,
And be again plain Master Walter. What!
Dost thou not apprehend me? Yes, thou dost!
Command thyself—Don't gasp! My pupil—daughter!
Come to thy father's heart! [*JULIA rushes into his arms.*]

Enter FATHOM.

Fath. Thievery! Elopement—escape—arrest!

Wal. What's the matter?

Fath. Mistress Helen is running away with Master Modus
—Master Modus is running away with Mistress Helen—but
we have caught them, secured them, and here they come, to
receive the reward of their merits.

Enter HELEN and MODUS, followed by Servants.

Helen. I'll ne'er wed man, if not my cousin Modus.

Mod. Nor woman I, save cousin Helen's she.

Wal. A daughter and a nephew has my friend,

Without their match in duty! You shall marry.
 For you, sir, who to-day have lost an earldom,
 Yet would have shared that earldom with my child—
 My only one—content yourself with prospect
 Of the succession—it must fall to you,
 And fit yourself to grace it. Ape not those
 Who rank by pride. The man of simplest bearing
 Is yet a lord, when he's a lord indeed!
 Sir Thomas Clifford, take my daughter's hand!—
 If now you know the master of her heart!
 Give it, my Julia! You suspect, I see,
 And rightly, there has been some masking here.
 Content thee, daughter, thou shalt know anon,
 How jealousy of my mis-shapen back
 Made me mistrustful of a child's affections—
 Who doubted e'en a wife's—so that I dropp'd
 The title of thy father, lest thy duty
 Should pay the debt thy love alone could solve.
 All this and more, that to thy friends and thee
 Pertains, at fitting time thou shalt be told.
 But now thy nuptials wait—the happy close
 Of thy hard trial—wholesome, though severe!
 The world won't cheat thee now—thy heart is proved;—
 Thou know'st thy peace by finding out its bane,
 And ne'er wilt act from heedless impulse more!

*He wanted
 to be sure
 that she loved
 him first
 with duty*

END OF THE HUNCHBACK.



Without their aid in days of old, you would have
 For you, it is the only way to find
 (It would have been a great deal better if you had -
 It is only one - a great deal better if you had -
 (It is the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 And the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 Who went to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 Is not a great deal better if you had - a great deal better if you had -
 In the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 If you are the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 This is the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 And the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 Contact with the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 How the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 Made the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 We have the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 The only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 Should not the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 All this and more, that is the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 Perhaps, as the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 But now the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 Of the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 The only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 Then know the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -
 And not for the only way to find it - a great deal better if you had -

THE HUNTER.

THE WIFE:

A Tale of Mantua.

DEDICATED
TO CAPTAIN THOMAS BLAIR

(OF THE HON. COMPANY'S SHIP WILLIAM FAIRLIE).

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN, IN 1833.)

<i>Mariana</i>	Miss ELLEN TREE.
<i>Floribel</i>	Miss SYDNEY.
<i>Leonardo Gonzaga</i> } Princes of {	Mr. C. KEAN.
<i>Ferrardo Gonzaga</i> } Mantua {	Mr. WARDE.
<i>Count Florio</i>	Mr. DIDDEAR.
<i>Julian St. Pierre</i>	Mr. SHERIDAN KNOWLES.
<i>Antonio</i> , a Curate	Mr. G. BENNETT.
<i>Lorenzo</i> , an Advocate of Rome ..	Mr. ABBOTT.
<i>Hugo</i> , Guardian to Mariana	Mr. RANSFORD.
<i>Bartolo</i>	Mr. MEADOWS.
<i>Bernardo</i>	Mr. TURNOUR.
<i>Carlo</i>	Mr. BARNES.
<i>Marco</i>	Mr. HENRY.
<i>Pietro</i>	Mr. PAYNE.
<i>Stephano</i>	Mr. J. COOPER.
<i>First Lord</i>	Mr. IRWIN.
<i>Advocate of Mantua</i>	Mr. HAINES.
<i>First Officer</i>	Mr. T. MATTHEWS.
<i>Second Officer</i>	Mr. MEARS.
<i>Courier</i>	Mr. HEATH.

SCENE—MANTUA ;—AFTERWARDS THE CAMP.

PROLOGUE,

SPOKEN BY MR. WARDE.

UNTOWARD fate no luckless wight invades
More sorely than the Man who drives *two trades*;
Like Esop's bat, between two natures placed,
Scowl'd at by *mice*, among the *birds* disgraced.
Our author thus, of twofold fame exactor,
Is doubly scouted,—both as Bard and Actor!
Wanting in haste a Prologue, he applied
To three poetic friends; was thrice denied.
Each glared on him with supercilious glance,
As on a Poor Relation met by chance;
And one was heard, with more repulsive air,
To mutter "Vagabond," "Rogue," "Strolling Player!"
A poet once, he found—and look'd aghast—
By turning actor, he had lost his *caste*.
The verse patch'd up at length—with like ill fortune
His friends behind the scenes he did importune
To speak his lines. He found them all tight shz,
Nodding their heads in cool civility.
"Their service in the Drama was enough,
The poet might recite the poet's stuff!"
The rogues—they like him hugely—but it stung 'em,
Somehow—to think a Bard had got among 'em.
Their mind made up—no earthly pleading shook it,
In pure compassion till I undertook it.
Disown'd by Poets and by Actors too,
Dear Patrons of both arts, he turns to you!
If in your hearts some tender feelings dwell
From sweet VIRGINIA, or heroic TELL:
If in the scenes which follow you can trace
What once has pleased you—an unbidden grace—
A touch of nature's work—an awkward start
Or ebullition of an Irish heart—
Cry, clap, commend it! If you like them not,
Your former favours cannot be forgot.
Condemn them—damn them—hiss them if you will—
Their author is your grateful servant still!

THE WIFE:

A TALE OF MANTUA.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Mantua.*

Enter LEONARDO GONZAGA and LORENZO.

Leon. So in my native city, thanks to Heaven,
Ten years and more elapsed, I stand again!
A boy it sent me forth, takes back a man.
Hail to it! 'Tis mine old acquaintance still,
In nothing strange—unalter'd! To a stone
The same I left it! Glad am I to see it—
None better loves its venerable face!

Lor. I'm glad to see you smile.

Leon. I do so, signor.

I am a boy again! The days come back
When smallest things made wealth of happiness
And ever were at hand! when I did watch
With panting heart the striking of the clock,
Which hardly sounded ere the book was shut.
Then for the race—the leap—the game—O, signor,
The vigour and endurance of such joy!
Is't e'er to come again?—and care so light,
That, looking back, I smile that thought it care,
And call it part of pleasure! I'm again
In Mantua!

Lor. Then here we say farewell.

Leon. Not so! Acquaintance, born and nurtured in
Adversity, is worth the cherishing!

'Tis prov'd steel which one may trust one's life to.

You are a stranger here in Mantua.

Which I am native to. What brings you hither?

If 'tis a cause no scruple of just weight

Forbids thee to unfold, unbosom thee;

And, in return for what thou part'st with, take

The zeal and honour of a hearty friend,

And service too, to boot!—You pause from doubt
Either of my ability or faith.

If this, I'm sorry for't—If that, take heed!

You know not by the eye the practised limb
 Where the inform'd and active sinew lies,
 That's equal to the feat. What, silent still?
 'Sdeath, man! a dwarf is not to be despised,
 For he may have a giant for his friend,
 And so be master of a giant's strength!
 Come, come, have confidence!—'Tis the free rein
 Which takes the willing courser o'er the leap
 He'd miss, suppose you check'd him!

Lor. There are men
 Whose habits in abeyance hold their natures,
 Which still remain themselves.—Your temperament
 Is of the sanguine kind, and so is mine;
 But lo, the difference! Thy frankness brooks
 No pause—thy wish is scarce conceived, ere told—
 As if men's hearts were open as their looks,
 And trust were due to all! The law hath been
 My study, signor; and, these three years past,
 My practice too; and it hath taught me this:—
 To doubt, with openness to be convinced,
 Is to remain on this side danger, yet
 No fraction lack of generosity,
 Which it becomes a noble mind to cherish.

Leon. And doubt you me?

Lor. No, signor; but drew back,
 When you, with instant promptness, made advance,
 Where I, with all the heart to take the step,
 Had still, I fear, been standing! You shall know
 My errand hither. I am nephew—

Leon. Stop

Till these pass on!

Enter BARTOLO, CARLO, BERNARDO, *and others.*

Carlo. Will not the duke postpone the cause?

Bar. I tell thee no.

Carlo. And wherefore?

Bar. What's that to thee?—Is not he the duke? Shall
 such a piece of flesh and bone as thou art, question the duke?

Carlo. Why not?

Bar. Why not? Would any one believe he had been born
 in Mantua? Now mark how I shall answer him! Dost thou
 drink Burgundy?

Carlo. No, but water.

Bar. Then art thou, compared to the great duke, what
 water is to Burgundy.

Carlo. He is but flesh and blood.

Bar. But what kind of flesh and blood? Answer me that!
 Wouldst thou, that dinest upon garlic and coarse bread, and
 wastest them down with water, compare thyself to one who
 sits down, every day of the week, to a table of three courses?
 Thou art no more than a head of garlic to the duke!

Ber. Say on, Bartolo! Well! The duke refuses to postpone the cause; and what then?

Bar. Why then the case must come on.

Ber. And what will be the end on't?

Bar. That knows the duke.

Carlo. But what *ought* it to be?

Bar. What the great duke wills.

Carlo. Why so?

Bar. Because that must be.

Ber. She was a bold girl, when they forced her to the church, to refuse to give her hand there, and claim the protection of the curate.

Bar. He was a bolder man to have anything to say to so mettlesome a piece of stuff.

Carlo. And to refuse a count!

Bar. Her cause will not thrive the better for that; unless, indeed, the duke be wroth with the count, for honourably affecting a commissary's ward.

Leon. [*Aside.*] You seem intent on their discourse?

Lor. [*Aside.*] I am so.

Ber. You saw her, Bartolo, did you not?

Bar. Yes, I was passing by, when they were forcing her into the church, and followed them in.

Carlo. Is she as handsome as they say?

Bar. Humph!—handsome?—Handsome is this, and handsome is that. I could sooner tell the absence of beauty than the presence of it. Now thou art not beautiful; but dress thee like a duke, and it might change thee. Thou that art an ugly craftsman, might become a beautiful duke. Notwithstanding I think I dare pronounce her handsome—very handsome! nay, I will go further, and confess that, were she a countess, or duchess, I would call her the most beautiful woman in Mantua.

Ber. But why wishes the curate to have the cause postponed?

Bar. To wait for a learned doctor of the law, for whom he has sent to Rome, but who has not yet arrived, though hourly looked for.

Carlo. What! must one send for law to Rome?

Bar. Yes, if one cannot find it in Mantua.

Carlo. Cannot one find law in Mantua?

Bar. Not if it be all bought up. There's not a legal man of note whom the count has not retained; so was the curate forced to send for his nephew to Rome—a man, it is reported, of great learning, and of profound skill in his profession, though hardly yet out of his nonage.

Leon. [*Aside.*] You colour, signor! 'Tis of you he speaks?

Carlo. Fears he to come to Mantua, or what?

Bar. 'Tis thought the brigands have detained him—a plague upon the rascals! A word in your ears, signors. You all know that Bartolo is a loyal man?

All. We do, Bartolo.

Bar. Said I ever a word against the duke?

All. No.

Bar. You are right, signors; nor would I, though the duke were to hang every honest man in Mantua; for is he not the duke?—and is not Bartolo a loyal man! Now if I speak of the duke's cousin, whom the brigands, they say, have killed, speak I against the duke?

All. No!

Bar. Is't treason to say "a pity that he was killed?"

All. No!

Bar. Ah, signors, had he succeeded his father, he would have made a proper duke. Is this saying anything against his cousin that is the duke?

All. No!

Bar. I warrant me, no! Catch Bartolo talking treason! Who says a word against the duke? he dies, as Bartolo is a loyal man! But fare you well, signors. The trial comes on at noon—and noon will soon be here.

Ber. We go your way.

Bar. Come on, then. Remember I said not a word against the duke. [BARTOLO and others go out.]

Leon. Of you he spoke—was it not so?

Lor. It was.

Leon. You come to Mantua to plead the cause
Of this fair damsel. You were here before,
But that the brigands intercepted you,—
Your hurt, but my advantage, whose escape,
Long time their captive, you contrived. And now,
To prove my friendship more than wordy vaunting—
I have the power to serve you. Take me with you.
Your clerk, you said, opposing vain resistance,
The hot-brain'd robber slew. Suppose me him.
I have a smattering of his vocation,
A notion of the mystery of yours;
And I would hear, by their own lips recited,
This worthy priest and beauteous damsel's cause,
For reasons which—you smile?

Lor. A thought just cross'd me.

Leon. I know thy thought—'Tis wrong!—'Tis not the heat
Of youthful blood which prompts—You smile again?

Lor. Your pardon.—If I did, you have to thank

The quickness of your apprehension.

Leon. Mark me!—

I have loved my last—and that love was my first!
A passion like a seedling that did spring,
Whose germ the winds had set; of stem so fine,
And leaf so small, to inexperienced sight
It pass'd for nought,—until, with swelling trunk,
And spreading branches, bowing all around,
It stood a goodly tree! Are you content?
This was my sadness, signor, which the sight
Of my dear native city briefly banish'd!

Which thy misgiving hath brought back again;
And which will be the clothing of my heart,
While my heart calls this breast of mine its house.

Lor. I pray you, pardon me!

Leon. I pray you, peace!

Time presses.—Once again, have confidence,
And take me with you to your uncle's home.
More than you credit me, I may bestead you.
Wilt take my hand?

Lor. I will!

Leon. Have with you, then!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*Antonio's House.*

Enter ANTONIO and PIETRO.

Ant. What lacks it now of noon?

Piet. An hour or more.

Ant. No chance of his arrival!—This delay
Perplexes me! Is it neglect?—I thought
His answer would have been his presence here,
Prompt as my summons; yet he neither comes
Nor sends excuse. 'Tis very strange! She holds
The same sedate, collected carriage still?

Piet. She does, and native seems it to the maid
As her fair brow, wherefrom it calmly looks,
As from its custom'd and assuréd seat—
A gentleness that smiles without a smile—
For 'tis the sweetness, not of cheek, or lip
Alone; but every feature—every act—
Delights the heart that's near her. Silence is
Her favourite mood, yet ne'er repels she converse,
While every theme hath one unvaried close—
A blessing on your reverence.

Ant. Poor girl!

She owes me nought. Why do I serve my Master,
If not to do his bidding? Is it but
To hold the crook? Nay, but to use the crook!
To be, indeed, the shepherd of the flock—
Wakeful and watchful—pitiful and faithful—
My charitable life, and not my title,
The badge and warrant of my sacred calling!
She was afflicted, persecuted, and
I succour'd her!—I, standing at the altar!
Beneath my Master's roof! His livery,
Blazon'd, as ne'er was earthly king's, upon me!
What could I less?

Piet. Fails he to come, for whom
Your reverence looks, to plead the damsel's cause;
Must it perforce go on?

Ant. It must; and I

Myself will be her advocate, before
The haughty duke! For problems of deep law,
Will give him axioms of plain truth; and paint
Her thrilling grievance—to the life; with tears,
Which, Pity seeing, shall to every heart
That owns its influence, her cause commend,
And gather tears to aid them!

Enter STEPHANO.

Ste. May it please you,
Two strangers, craving audience, wait below.

Ant. Admit them! 'Tis my nephew! Worthy Pietro,
Have all in readiness, that we appear
Before the duke when cited.

[PIETRO goes out.]

Enter LEONARDO GONZAGA and LORENZO.

So, Lorenzo!

Lor. Save you, my reverend uncle!

Ant. Now a week

I've look'd for you—but waive we explanations.
Thou'rt come!—and to the business that has brought thee:—
I have possess'd thee of the damsel's cause
In all its bearings—Art prepared to plead it?

Lor. I am, so please your reverence;—but, with us,
That evidence is best which is direct.
That the Count Florio seeks the damsel's hand,—
That wills her guardian she bestow it on him,—
That she resists her uncle and the count,—
I know; but not the cause of her dissent.

Children to guardians should obedience pay;
A match, so lofty, warrants some enforcement,
Which, not on slight grounds, should the maid resist.

Ant. Ground know I none, save strong aversion.

Lor. Pray you

Vouchsafe us conference with the maid herself.

Her deposition shall this gentleman

That's come with me—my trusty clerk—set down.

Ant. I'll bring her to you;—but, I charge you, boy,

You keep in mind you are her advocate;

For she, indeed, of those rare things of earth,

Which of the debt that's due to it, rob Heaven,

That men set earth before it, is the rarest!

Then guard thee, nephew!—rather with thine ears

And tongue discourse with her, than with thine eyes,

Lest thou forget it was her cause, not she,

That summon'd thee to Mantua!

Lor. Fear me not!

[ANTONIO goes out.]

Leon. A service of some danger, it should seem,

Your reverend uncle has engaged you in;

And, by his pardon, for your safety, uses

Means which your peril more enhance than lessen.

The soldier that is taught to fear his foe,
Is half o'ercome before he takes the field.

Lor. Is't from your own misgivings you doubt me!

Leon. No!—As I said before, my heart is safe—
Love-proof, with love!—which, if it be not, signor,
A passion that can only once be felt—
Hath but one object—lives and dies with us—
And, while it lives, remains itself, while all
Attachments else keep changing—it is nothing!
I used to laugh at love, and deem it fancy.
My heart would choose its mistress by mine eyes;
Whom scarce they found before I sought a new one.
I wooed not then the beauty of the soul—
The passing loveliness which lodgeth there—
A world beyond the charm of face or form!
I found it! When or where—for weal or woe—
It matters not! I found it!—wedded it!
Never to be divorced from that true love
Which taught me love, indeed!

Lor. You wedded it?—

Then was your passion blest?

Leon. No, Signor, no!

Question no further, prithee! Here's your uncle!

Enter ANTONIO and MARIANA.

Ant. Lo, nephew! here's the maid,
To answer for herself!

Lor. [*To LEONARDO.*] She's fair, indeed!
Description ne'er could give her out the thing,
One only glance avows her!—Prithee, look!

Leon. Show her to him who has not seen the fairest!
Remember, signor, Time's no gazer, but
A traveller, whose eye is on his road,
And feet in motion, ever! Noon's at hand!

Lor. I thank you. Note my questions—her replies.
Your guardian—Is he your relation too?

Mari. No.—Would he were! That stay had needs be strong,
Which failing, we've none other left, to cling to.

Leon. Oh, music!—

Lor. What's the matter?

Leon. 'Twas a bird!—

Whose throat, for sweetness, beggars all the grove!
Yea, of its rich and faméd minstrel makes
A poor and common chorister!

Lor. Hear her!

You'll have no ear for any other bird:
Look at her, and you'll have no ear for her,
Your tranced vision every other sense
Absorbing!—Gave you promise to the count?

Mari. None!

Lor. Nor encouragement?

Mari. Such as aversion
Gives to the thing it loathes!

Lor. Have you a vow
Or promise to another?—That were a plea
To justify rejection. You are silent.
And yet you speak—if blushes speak—and all
Confess they do. Come, come, I know you love!
Tell me, I pray, the story of your love!
That, thereon, I may found my proper plea
To show your opposition not a thing
Of fantasy, caprice, or frowardness;
But such as all men should commend you for.
Prove it the joint result of heart and reason,
Each other's act approving. Was't in Mantua
You met?

Mari. No, signor, in my native land!

Lor. And that is——

Mari. Switzerland!

Lor. His country too?

Mari. No, signor, he belong'd to Mantua.

Lor. That's right!—You are collected and direct.
In your replies. I dare be sworn your passion
Was such a thing, as by its neighbourhood
Made even piety and virtue richer
Than e'er they were before. How grew it? Come,
Thou know'st thy heart! Look calmly into it,
And see how innocent a thing it is
Thou fear'st so much to show.—I wait your answer.
How grew your passion?

Mari. As my stature grew,
Which rose without my noting it, until
They said I was a woman. I kept watch
Beside what seem'd his death-bed. From beneath
An avalanche my father rescued him,
The sole survivor of a company
Who wander'd through our mountains. A long time
His life was doubtful, signor, and he call'd
For help, whence help alone could come, which I,
Morning and night, invoked along with him.—
Thus 'gan our souls to mingle!

Lor. I perceive.
You mingled souls until you mingled hearts?
You loved at last.—Was't not the sequel, maid?

Mari. I loved indeed! If I but nursed a flower
Which, to the ground, the rain and wind had beaten,
That flower of all our garden was my pride!
What then was he to me, for whom I thought
To make a shroud; when, tending on him, still,
With hope, that, baffled still, still lost not heart,
I saw at last the ruddy dawn of health
Begin to mantle o'er his pallid form,

And glow—and glow—till forth at last it burst
Into confirm'd, broad, and glorious day!

Lor. You loved, and were beloved?

Mari. To say I was,
Were to affirm what oft his eyes avouch'd,
What many an action testified—and yet—
What wanted confirmation of his tongue.
But if he loved—it brought him not content!
'Twas now abstraction—now a start—anon
A pacing to and fro—anon, a stillness,
As nought remain'd of life, save life itself,
And feeling, thought, and motion, were extinct!
Then all again was action!—disinclined
To converse, save he held it with himself;
Which oft he did, in gloomy mood discoursing,
And ever and anon invoking Honour—
As some high contest there were pending, 'twixt
Himself and him, wherein her aid he needed.

Lor. This spoke impediment! Or he was bound,
By promise, to another; or had friends
Whom it behoved him to consult, and doubted;
Or 'twixt you lay disparity, too wide
For love itself to leap.

Mari. I saw a struggle,
But knew not what it was!—I wonder'd, still,
That what to me was all content, to him
Was all disturbance; but my turn arriv'd.
At length he talk'd of leaving us! At length,
He fix'd the parting day!—but kept it not—
How my heart bounded!—then I knew how low
It had been sinking. Deeper still it sank
When next he fix'd the day to go; and, then,
It sank, to bound no more! He went, indeed!

Lor. To follow him, you came to Mantua?

Mari. What could I do but follow him, with whom
My heart had gone; and, with it, everything—
Cot, garden, vineyard, rivulet, and wood,
Lake, sky, and mountain—e'en my father, signor,—
Could I remain behind? That father found
His child was not at home; he loved me, signor,
And ask'd me, one day, whither we should go?
I said, "To Mantua." I follow'd him
To Mantua!—to breathe the air he breathed,
To walk upon the ground he walk'd upon,
To look upon the things he look'd upon,
To look, perchance, on him! perchance to hear him,
To touch him!—never to be known to him,
Till he was told, perhaps, I died, his love.

Lor. I pray you, signor, how do you get on?
I see you play the woman well as I!
And, sooth to say, the eye were stone itself,

From which her story could not call a tear!
How get you on? indite you word for word
As she delivers it? How's this!—The page
As blank as first you found it!—All our pains
Have gone to lose our time!

Leon. I have a gift
Of memory, signor, which belongs to few.
What once I hear, stands as a written page
Before me; which, if question'd, I could read
Letter for letter.—You shall have anon
The proof of this. I have a friend or two
I fain would snatch a word with—That despatch'd,
I'll meet you at the duke's, and bring with me
The damsel's story, word for word set down,
And win your full content; or give you leave
To brand me an impostor, or aught else
A man should blush to pass for! Will you trust me?

Lor. I will.

Leon. You may, for you shall ne'er repent you.
I'll bring you aid you little count upon. [*Aside.*] [*Goes out.*]

Ant. Nay, nephew, urge your friend to stay. A space
You have for brief refreshment; and, in sooth,
You want it, who, from travel just alighted,
Must needs to business go.

Lor. Detain not him!
Some needful avocations call him hence.
I wait your pleasure, uncle.

Ant. Daughter, come.
Some effort has it cost to tell your story,
But profit comes of it. Your cause is strong.
Your vows, which virtually are another's,
Heaven doth itself forbid you give the count!
Is't not so, nephew?

Lor. There I'll found the plea,
Which to the conscience of the duke I'll put.
Knows he, whom, at his death—which I'm advised
Took place in Mantua—your father named
Your guardian—knows the commissary this,
Which thou hast now related?

Mari. Not from me.
My father's death was sudden.—Long time since!
He and the commissary were mere acquaintance.
What pass'd between them, save the testament
Which left me ward unto the commissary,
I am a stranger to.

Lor. Since you came hither
Him have you seen, for sake of whom you came?

Mari. No!

Lor. Nor hast clue direct, or indirect,
To find him out?

Mari. No, signor.

Lor. And how long
Have you sojourn'd in Mantua?

Mari. Two years.

Lor. And is your love the same?

Mari. Am I the same?

Lor. Such constancy should win a blessing.

Ant. Yes!

And strange as 'tis, what seems to us affliction
Is oft the hand that helps us to our wish.

So may it fall with thee—if Heaven approves! [*They go out.*]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Hall of Justice in the Duke's Palace.*

On one side BARTOLO, BERNARDO, CARLO, and others; *on the other, Lords and Ladies, &c. &c.*

Bar. Silence, signors! Keep order! The parties in the cause are coming—Here they are!

Enter MARIANA, leaning on ANTONIO, attended by LORENZO; after them the COUNT FLORIO, and various Doctors of the Law.

Bar. That is the maiden; and that the curate, upon whom she leans.

Bern. And where's the count?

Bar. Yonder, surrounded by the Doctors of the Law.

Bern. The maid is very fair!

Bar. Yes, for a burgher's daughter. Hush! The duke approaches.

The cause will straight come on.

Enter the DUKE FERRARDO GONZAGA, and Attendants.

Fer. Your seats! your seats! [*The whole assembly rise.*]

Bring on this cause! Who answers for our friend,
The count?

Advo. My lord, so please you, I.

Fer. Proceed.

Advo. The question lies between the count, and this,
The guardian of the maid—whose froward act
Your highness is possess'd of—on the one side;
The maid herself, and that, the reverend man,
Who countenances her resistance, on
The other. Hereupon the count defends
His right unto the maiden's hand—the will
Her father left—the promise of the man

Therein, declared her guardian, unto whom
Behoves her choice to bow—for choice herself
The maid, of right, hath none.—This were the case,
Proposed her guardian to affiance her
To one in rank as far beneath the maid
As is the maid beneath the count. But lo
The difference! By this alliance gains
The maid a consort of a rank so high
And wealth so broad, he were pretender fit
To the hand of any maid in Italy!
Such is our cause. In the first place, the right
To give away the maid: and in the next
That right, exerted for her highest good.

Bar. He is a fair spokesman—The duke deliberates.

Lor. My friend is lost, almost as soon as found.
He has deceived me. No! he comes at last,
And keeps indeed his promise, if he brings
Such friends as these to back us!

*Enter LEONARDO GONZAGA as Clerk to LORENZO; followed by
several persons of distinction.*

Bar. Observe you, signors! Are not those who just now
entered, relatives and friends of him that were the duke, had
not mishap stepped in 'twixt him and his father's seat?

Ber. They are.

Bar. Do they abet the maid? You see they take their
station round her.—They are not wont, of late, to frequent the
palace.

Ber. Peace! The duke is going to speak.

Fer. Count, on what plea claim you the maiden's hand?

Florio. Her guardian hath affianced her to me.

Fer. Speak you, her guardian,—states the count the fact?

Hugo. He does, so please your highness!

Fer. What's her age?

Hugo. She lacks a year of her majority.

Fer. Her rank?

Hugo. Her father was a burgher.

Fer. Wealth

Has she been left?

Hugo. What, charily enjoy'd,

From manual labour might, perhaps, exempt her.

Fer. And stoops the count so low to be despised—
Rejected—spurn'd! For shame! The maid be given
Back to her guardian's custody; and if
Obedience be refused, let him enforce it!
The cause is judged.

Lor. Your highness' pardon, but
The other side's to hear.

Fer. Who's he that speaks?

Lor. The counsel for the maid.

Fer. Let him be wise.

And not gainsay our pleasure.—It is told!

The cause is over—finally adjudged.

Lor. How far your highness' power extends I know!

Yet though it reach unto my life, that life

I hold to be my good, and husband not

A minute longer than it ministers

Unto mine honour's profitable use.

The duty which I should discharge in vain,—

Not through its own demerit, but defect

In him, whose will availeth more than right,—

I leave undone :—but 'gainst the power protest

Which makes me—servant unto justice—slave

Unto oppression. For the pangs that wring

That maiden's heart, be answerable thou,

Not I!

Ant. Your highness—

Fer. Peace! I will not hear thee, father!

Ant. But Heaven will hear me! Lo! I do call upon it

For judgment on the man who wrongs this maid!

And surely as I call 'twill answer me,—

And speak to thee—be thou that wicked man—

When power thou hast no longer to cry "Peace!"

Fer. That wicked man!

Ant. O, poverty of earth—

That men do deeds which win them evil names,

And spurn the names, but not the deeds which win them!

What Heaven commands me speak, I dare to speak!

Suffer'd the maid, from any, violence,

Should he not die? What callest thou the deed

Which would condemn her to a loathéd bed?

Think'st thou there's virtue in constrained vows,

Half-utter'd—soulless—falter'd forth in fear,

To purge the nauseousness of such a deed,

That Heaven won't smell the damning odour on't?

And if there is, then truth and grace are nought!

Then sanctity is nought! yea, Heaven itself!

And in its empyreal essence lies

No savour of its sweetness!

Fer. Peace, I say!

Ant. Thou canst not bid the thunder hold its peace—

Why criest thou peace to me?—Nay, bid me speak—

That thou mayst bear to hear the thunder speak—

The herald, earth-accredited of Heaven—

Which when men hear, they think upon Heaven's King,

And run the items o'er of the account

To which he's sure to call them.

Fer. Dread my power!

Ant. Dread thou—the power from which thou hold'st that power!

Proud man, I brave thee where thou sitt'st, and in

The ear of earth and heaven denounce the sentence

Which gives that spotless maid to violation!

Fer. I'll hear no more!—The cause is judged—the maid
Her rightful guardian take!

Mari. [*Advancing to centre.*] And if he does,
He takes a corse! Lo! death is at my lips;

[*Taking a small phial from her bosom.*]

The hand or foot that offers to approach,
Commits a murder! In this phial bides

The bane of fifty lives! Pass but a drop,

Were now the sexton told to dig my grave,

Were now his foot upon the shovel set,

Ere he began, I should be ready for it!

Who stirs? Lo, here I sink upon my knee!

Or let the count his hateful suit forego,

Or let my guardian his consent revoke,

Or let the duke recall his foul decree,

Or hence, by mine own limbs, I never rise!

Fer. Why to the count this strong repugnance, girl?

Mari. Giv'st thou thy oath that none shall stir, I'll tell
thee.

Fer. I give it thee.

Mari. I am a maid betrothed!

All but the rites, a wife! A wedded heart

Although unwedded hand! Reflect on that!

Making me give my hand unto the count,

You make me give what is another's right;—

Constraining me to an unrighteous act,

Contenting him where it is base to wish,

And doing violence to Heaven itself,

Which curses lips that move 'gainst consciences!

Fer. Lives he of whom you speak in Mantua?

Mari. In Mantua, he told me he did live.

Fer. What! know you not the place of his sojourn?

Mari. Yes! where he still sojourns where'er he is!

Fer. And where is that?

Mari. My heart! Though travels he

By land or sea—though I'm in Mantua,

And he as distant as the pole away—

I look but into that, and there he is,

Its king enthroned, with every thought, wish, will,

In waiting at his feet!

Fer. This is the mood—

The fantasy—of girlhood! Do we hold

Our power on sufferance of a baby-maid,

Who mocks us with a threat she durst not keep!

Secure her!

Mari. Lo, the phial's at my lips!

Let him who would commit a murder, do it!

Had he a thousand hands to wait upon thee,

The slightest movement of this little one

Would make them useless all!

Leon. My Mariana!

Fer. She has dropp'd the phial!

Leon. [*Coming forward.*] Stir not, on your lives!
My Mariana!

Mari. 'Tis he!

Leon. It is, my love!

'Tis he who won thy heart, not seeking it!

'Tis he whose heart thou wonn'st, not knowing it!

Who saw thee rich in all but fortune's gifts,

And—servant unto men, though lord of them—

Balanced their poor esteem against thy wealth,

Which kingdoms could not match! Accountable

To others, never I reveal'd the love,

I did not see the way for thee to bless;

As only thou wouldst bless it! Now that way

Is clear!—Is open!—lies before me straight,

Without impediment, or anything

Which, with the will, I cannot overleap!

And now, my love before! my love till now!

And still my love!—now, now, I call thee wife,

And wed thee here—here—here—in Mantua!

Fer. Remove that slave who knows not where he is!

Leon. Descend, great duke, who know'st not where thou
sitt'st!

Fer. Where do I sit?

Leon. Why in thy cousin's seat!

Fer. He's dead!

Leon. He's not! He lives, and claims his seat,

Back'd by his kinsmen, friends, and every one!

That owns a loyal heart in Mantua! [*Throws off his gown.*]

Do you not know me, cousin?

Fer. Leonardo!

Leon. Six years have we been strangers, but I see

You know my father's face, if not your cousin's.

Fer. I do, and yield to you that father's seat.

Leon. Cousin, the promptness of your abdication

Invests it with a grace to which we bow.

We'll spare your sight the pain of our accession,

And pray that with the parties in this cause—

I mean the count and guardian of the maid—

You now withdraw, and at your former mansion,

Wait intimation of our further pleasure.

I would not have you speak, so please you, now;

When we confer, it must be privily.

Yet out of honour to our common blood,

Well as in pledge of no unkind intent,

Your hand before we go! [*They shake hands.*]

Fer. Nay, let me speak

At least my welcome, and my thanks, your highness—

Before I take my leave. [*FERRARDO, FLORIO, and HUGO, go out.*]

Ant. Rise, signors, rise!

Give, Leonardo, duke of Mantua!

Leon. We thank you, friends! This welcome is of the heart.

For you we take this seat. Thou reverend man,

Be confessor unto the duke of Mantua;
 Thou man of law and honour, be his friend,
 And advocate of state; and both of you
 Lead hither that abstracted maid! But no!
 That office should be mine. [*Descends.*] In Italy
 Shines there a brow on which my coronet
 Could find so proud a seat? My Mariana,
 Wilt be my bride? Nay, do not tax thy tongue
 With that, thy looks have scarce the power to speak!
 Come!—Share my throne with me! Come, Mariana!
 The consort of the duke of Mantua!

[*She faints in his arms as the scene closes.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in the Palace.*

Enter COSMO and COURIER.

Cos. The duke? which duke? I know now not which; we
 have had two within the last ten minutes; I know not which
 duke it is thou wantest.

Cour. I tell thee, the duke of Mantua.

Cos. Is thy business public or private?

Cour. Dost thou not see I come from Rome? There are
 great matters on foot, which it behoves the duke to know;
 and herein, if I mistake not, he is apprised of them.

Cos. Nay, then, thy business is public, and of course concerns the reigning duke.

Cour. Of course it does.

Cos. I'll bring thee to him.

Cour. Lead on!

Enter BARTOLO, BERNARDO, and MARCO, meeting them.

Bar. Signor Cosmo!

Cos. Don't stop me, Signor Bartolo. I'm in haste.

Bar. Nay, a word—only a word. Who is that?

Cos. A courier from Rome.

Bar. I was right, Bernardo. Save you, signor. You come,
 I hear, from Rome. How are they all at Rome?

Cour. Well, signor—all that I am acquainted with.

Bar. They have a great deal of news in Rome.

Cour. Sufficient, signor.

Bar. One likes to hear the news.

Cour. I trouble myself little about it.

Bar. That is because 'tis your vocation to hear it. Nobody
 is in love with his vocation. Now 'tis the reverse with me.
 I mind the news as much as I mind my meals. Pray you,
 signor, have mercy upon a hungry man, and tell me the news
 from Rome.

Cour. Great news, signor,—there is going to be a war.

Bar. A war! A war, Bernardo—Cosmo—and pray you,
 signor, with what power are they going to war?

Cour. With the French.

Bar. The devil!

Cour. You will have a fine opportunity for showing your valour, signor.

Bar. I thank you, signor. I was never an ostentatious man, I am content to be a man of valour—I don't care to show it; but I thank you for the news. Come along, Bernardo—Carlo. A war, signors, a war! What a glorious thing is a war! Here's news!

[They go out severally.]

SCENE III.—*The Vestibule before the Ducal Palace.*

Enter ST. PIERRE.

St. P. Here be my seat upon the palace-steps,
Although they hang me from the portico!
Have a heart, Poverty, thou hast nought to lose,—
Nor land, nor mansion, nor habiliments,
That thou shouldst play the craven! That thou call'st
Thy life—what is it?—Hunger!—Nakedness!
A lodging 'neath the eaves! ten scornful looks
For one of pity; and that one a proof
That thou'rt an anguish to the sight of men!
Then what carest thou for cuffs? Nay, cuff again;
That they may fall the heavier!—satisfied
That he who brains thee, does thee, Poverty,
A thousand times the good, he does thee ill!—
Come—keep the portal of the mighty duke,
Who made thee what thou art; nor let him pass
Till from his fear thou wring'st an alms, or else
A quick release obtainst from his wrath!

Fer. *[without].* Be sure thou keep'st the hour.

St. P. Talk of the fiend,
They say, and here he comes! Here comes the duke.

Fer. *[Entering.]* Ho!—Clear the vestibule!

St. P. Great duke, descend!
No retinue impedes your gracious way!
Here is no throng,—for Poverty sits hero
Craving a foot of your fair palace-steps,
For lack of better resting-place.

Fer. Who are you?

What do you here!

St. P. Wait, mighty duke, an alms!
I could not ask the humble craftsman one,
I used to cuff him;—nor the tradesman one,
I used to make him doff his cap to me;—
Nor yet the merchant one, he gave me way,
Or I gave him my shoulder;—nor the courtier,
My hilt I handled soon as he touch'd his;—
In brief, I pass'd by all degrees of men,
To beg an alms of the most gracious duke!

Fer. Here!

St. P. What! a florin? give it to the street,
For the abaséd eye of vagrantry!
I make no livelihood of raggedness!

Fer. Scorn'st thou my gift?

St. P. Thy gift and thee, great duke!
Nay, frown not! Choler will disturb digestion,
And mar thy pleasant afternoon's repast;
Leave wrath to me, who have not tasted food
Since Wednesday last,—nor look for meal to-day.

Fer. Why, that would buy thee five!

St. P. What were five meals—
To starve anew! I should not light on thee
A second time to beg another alms!
Thou wouldst take care to shun me! Better starve
Outright,—for, saving thee, most gracious duke,
There's not a man in Mantua I'd stoop
To ask a ducat of.

Fer. Well, there's a ducat.

St. P. It will not do!

Fer. What hoa there!

St. P. Softly, duke!

Hush! better far that we confer alone,
For thy sake! mark!—for thy sake, gracious duke!
Fer. What means the villain?

St. P. Right, duke, that's my name!
What do I mean? I'll tell thee what I mean.
My wardrobe wants replenishing; if puffs
The wind, my hat is like to lose its crown;
My robe is all the covering I have;
My shoes are minus nearly all the soles!
And, then, I fain would change my lodgings, duke—
Which, sooth to say, is e'en the open street—
Less spacious would content me; last of all
I would be master of a larder, duke,
Would serve me, at the shortest, good a month,
That I might live so long at ease, and see
If aught turn'd up would make it worth my while
To shake a hand with the fair world again,
And live on terms with it.—Most gracious duke,
Give me a hundred ducats!

Fer. Dost thou think
To rob me at the palace-gates!

St. P. Who robs,
Provides him weapons. I have none, great duke,
Nor pistol, rapier, poniard,—not a knife:
I parted with them, one by one, for food!
For weeks have they been provender to me!
Think upon that, great duke; that at a meal
Spend'st twenty times their produce; and, so please you,
Give me a hundred ducats!

Fer. Thou art mad!

St. P. No, by *St. Jago*!—Try me! I have the use,
Of my wits. I'll neither leap into a flood,
Nor run into a fire! I can tell
The day of the week, the month of the year, the year;
I'll name you which are fast-days, which are not—
But that's no wonder, I have kept so many—
To balance this, I'll name you feast-days too!
I'll write and cipher for you;—finally,
I'll give you all the fractions to a jot,
That lie in a hundred ducats!

Servants enter from the Palace.

Fer. Seize him!

St. P. Stop [Menacing the servants, who pause.]
Till you have learn'd my name! Imports you much
To know it! 'Tis affix'd, most gracious duke,
To certain documents which only wait
Your leave to see the light.

Fer. What documents?

St. P. Shall these o'erhear, or private be our speech?

Fer. [To *Servants*.] You may withdraw a pace or two.

St. P. You see,
Great duke, I am not mad!

Fer. What documents?

St. P. One memorandum for a hundred crowns,
For whipping one that dared offend your grace.
I paid me with the pleasure of the task,
Nor ask'd the hire, but kept the document.
Another, for enticing to a haunt
Of interdicted play, a wealthy heir.
I scorn'd the hire for that,—though shame to say it,
I did not scorn to earn it—but I kept
The document.—A third—

Fer. Enough—*St. Pierre*!

St. P. Aha! you know me now?

Fer. How changed thou art,—
I ne'er had known thee!

St. P. It were strange if want
Look'd like abundance—which was never yet
Akin to it.

Fer. Here take my purse!

St. P. 'Tis rich—

Holds it a hundred ducats?

Fer. Twice the sum—

I want thee—that suffice!

St. P. That does suffice.

Fer. Get thee habiliments more rich than these,—
Appointments, too, fit to consort with them;
And come thou to mine ancient mansion straight.

St. P. I must dine first.

Fer. Eat sparingly.

St. P. Indeed!

I. See thou want'st me then—I'll go and dine.

Fer. Thy tears are not a pledge for continence.

St. P. I'll dine upon a crust! Nay, fear me not—
What time am I to take in all?—Two hours?

Fer. The half might serve thee.

St. P. Well; we'll say the half,—

The quarter shall suffice me, if thou wilt!

Fer. Make it as brief as may be.

St. P. Work that's sweet

Is quickly done!—I'll come in half an hour.

[*Goes out.*]

Fer. That which had been my bane, an hour ago,

Is now my medicine! This fellow owns

A quick and subtle wit; a reckless daring;

And hath a winning tongue, withal, and 'haviour.

Easy of conscience, too—yet, still, contrived

To keep some credit with the court. I know

The use of him. He has been mine, and mine

He needs must be again. So!—Suddenly

He quitted Mantua, and left with none

A clue to find the cause,—nor lack'd he then

Wardrobe or ducat! Misery has changed him;—

Her work abundance quickly shall undo!

I know the use of him, and I will use him.

Enter COUNT FLORIO.

Now, count, what brings you hither?

Florio. News, my lord,

That's sure of welcome! A brief honeymoon

Hath fate decreed your cousin! Scarce he takes

The seat were fitter yours, and weds his bride,

Ere comes advice the states must take the field

Against the power of France.

Fer. Good news indeed!

Florio. Forthwith he hies to Rome—

Fer. Most welcome news!

Florio. And by entreaty of his council, you—

As next in rank and lineage—are appointed

Our regent in his absence.

Fer. That's the best news.

Florio. His heart—that was against you—softened

Or by prosperity, or your ready yielding,

Or giving way on sudden exigence;

He offers reconciliation, by your friends,

And, straight, you are invited to his presence.

Fer. I come!—Great news!—I thank you!—Glorious news!

[*They go out.*]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Palace.**Enter FERRARDO and FLORIO.**Fer.* Another victory!*Florio.* So the rumour runs.*Fer.* Why Fortune plays the minion to him!—docs
His wish not only, but anticipates it!Chief after chief she thrusts aside, that he
May head the war; and, when he takes the lead,

Her moody favour, wavering before—

Alternate sun and cloud—shines fully forth

With strong and steady beam. Have many fallen?

Florio. A host, 'tis said, on either side.*Fer.* No wound,
No hurt for him?*Florio.* 'Tis so reported.*Fer.* So—*Florio.* Though twice he changed his charger—one disabled,
The second wounded, mortally!*Fer.* And he

As safe, as sitting in his ducal chair!

Why dangers, that are thorns to other men,

For him convert to flowers!

Florio. The duchess still
Persists in her seclusion?*Fer.* There, again,

I'm baffled! Would she mingle with the court,

His home of peace might compass for me what

I vainly hope for from the field of war,—

The downfall of his rule! I know my cousin;

For thoughtless boyhood often shows the man

Which wary manhood hides. A sense he has,

That's sickly tender to the touch of shame.

I have seen him, at a slight imputed fault

Colour to flame—anon grow ashy pale—

The dew in drops upon his forehead starting,—

His tongue without its use—his mouth agape—

His universal frame, vacuity

Of action and of power,—and, anon,

The glare and din, and tossing of the tempest!

To wound his honour to the quick, would be

To sting his core of life!

Florio. Thou couldst not hope

To wound it through his wife; whose love for him,

Gives, in his absence, all things to neglect!

Her bounding palfrey cannot woo her forth!

The palace vibrates with the dance, and still

She keeps her chamber, like a lone recluse.

Music, howe'er you try, can't tempt her from it,

She shuns its harmony as though 'twould jar!
 She visits no one—no one she receives!
 What chance of practising upon a wife,
 Who for an only absent lord, observes
 A sterner widowhood, than many hold
 In honour of a dead one!—Why do you smile?

Fer. To think, to what account a little art
 Might turn a little swerving, in a case
 Of self-denial, carried thus like hers
 To the admired extreme! I would St. Pierre
 Had kept his restless spirit more in check,
 Paid to my will submission, as he used,
 And not enlisted in my cousin's train,
 But stopp'd in Mantua! My plans were laid,
 Were sure, and long ere this had been matured,
 But for his wilfulness.

Florio. Of what avail
 Had been his presence here?

Fer. I should have found
 A use for him! Ne'er knew I yet the ear
 He could not keep a hold of, once he caught it.
 That fellow, with his tongue, has won more hearts
 Than any twenty men in Mantua,
 With tongues, and forms, and faces! I had contrived
 To throw him in her way!

Florio. There were no chance—

Fer. I know,—but I could make appearances
 Supply the place of facts—especially
 In her husband's absence—so that confidence,
 Itself, would construe guilt where no guilt was!
 So would I show her to the eyes of all,
 That, though she were like snow itself, new fallen,
 Men would believe her spotted!

Florio. If 'twere true
 That he it was who hither brought the news
 Of this new victory—

Fer. Saint Pierre?

Florio. Saint Pierre.

Fer. 'Tis so reported?

Florio. 'Tis.

Fer. Then, prove it true,
 Before he is an hour in Mantua
 He must be stripp'd of every ducat! Mind,
 Of that must thou take care!
 What mean those shouts?

[*Shouts.*]

Florio. They herald, doubtless, the approach of him
 That's bearer of the news.

Fer. Be it Saint Pierre,
 The moment he alights away with him
 To a house of play!—You are his master—Haste!
 Your beckon he will answer readily,
 As the game-bird his welcome challenger!

Florio. I'll do my best.

Fer. So do.—The confessor?

[*Goes out.*
[*Looking out.*

The cards come round to me! A score to one,
I hold the winning hand.—His reverence,
I have contrived to make at last my friend.
Your churchman dearly loves a convertite,
And he believes me his. A kindly man,
But, once confirm'd in error, positive;
And, from his calling, credulous to weakness,
Touching the proneness of the flesh to sin.
I have well examined him.

Enter ANTONIO.

Your blessing, father.

Ant. Thou hast it, son.

Fer. Whence come you now? No doubt
From the performance of some pious deed—
The shriving of some sin-oppressed soul—
The soothing of some sorrow-stricken heart—
Or sweet relieving of some needy child
Of merciless adversity.

Ant. No, my son,—

But from a trespasser that's, yet, unshriven;
A daughter who has swerved, and on whose soul
I had thought as soon to find the soil of sin
As tarnish upon new-refined gold!
A wife, who in the absence of her lord,
Lived like thy cousin's wife; with means to bless
Desires incontinent, a miracle
Of self-secluded, lonely chastity.

Fer. He comes in the very vein! You spoke just now
Of my cousin's wife. There's news of my dear cousin,
And, with submission, I would recommend
Her grace to show herself, to-day. Methinks,
If only for her health, she keeps herself
Too much alone.

Ant. So have I told her grace.

Fer. Indeed! I marvel that she perseveres
In the face of your admonishment! More strict
Would she be thought, than you, a holy man,
Would counsel her to be? Forgive me, father,
If 'tis uncharitable in me, but
I never loved extremes! Your constant weather
Is still the moderate, father. Storms and calms
Are brief.

Ant. You are right, my son.

Fer. I had been pleased

Less had she shown her fondness for her lord.
Love, of its own fidelity assured,
Ne'er studies the display on't!

Ant. Nay; she loves
Her lord.

Fer. And yet 'tis the predicament
Of love to wane upon possession. Where
I note an over-acted guardedness,
I still infer a consciousness of weakness;
And look to find—and seldom look in vain—
Some sudden giving way! Besides, in passion,
Excess is sign of its decaying, rather
Than lasting. Thus the frantic widow, who
To-day would make her husband's grave her bed,
A few months hence, enjoys another bed
Beside another husband! Maids, new-wed,
Who gloried in their choices, and with reason,
Leave them for new ones, for *no* reason, but
Because they are new! By love of novelty
Is human happiness too oft ensnared.
Mere novelty!—the common tempting bait,
Which gives, too oft, a worth to worthless things;
Luring us to forsake the good we have
For something else, which, mostly, proves our bane!
I would not doubt my cousin's wife, but wish
She moved, like other honourable dames,
Secure in her own truth. The life she leads
Something too much, methinks, solicits note,
Not by design, but in appearance only.
Yet had she more confided in herself,
Lived like herself—appear'd among the court—
Courteous to all—particular to none,
Save those to whom, next to her lord, she owes
Her highest duty—my reliance on her
Were stronger! Is't uncharitable, father,
To say so?—speak, and frankly—Wherefore else
Put I my heart into your saintly hands?

Ant. Nay, son—I think you speak in charity,
As one who blames through love. We'll see the duchess,
And jointly recommend to her a life
Of less severe restraint.

Fer. I thank your reverence!
You know I owe her grace some small amends,
And trust me, father, gladly would I make them! *[Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Ante-Room to the Chamber of the Duchess—*
A Window overlooking the Street.

Enter FLORIBEL.

Flo. A merry life for twenty-one to lead,
And in a woman too! from morn till night
Mew'd in a lonely tower! Heigho! It is
My lady's will. I would she had been born
In Mantua, where wives their husbands love
In reason! Well!—We'll live in hope she'll learn

-In time. I used to lead a dozen kinds
 Of life, in a day!—Now, in a dozen days,
 I lead but one! Ere breakfast, was a nun;
 Then play'd the housewife; after that, to horse;
 Then, dinner o'er, a Naiad on the lake,
 Floating to music! Evening changed the scene
 Again; and night brought on the closing scene,
 With open casement, list'ning, by the moon,
 The melting cadence of the serenade!
 Now morning, evening, noon, and night are nought—
 But morning, evening, noon, and night. No change
 Save in their turns and names! What I get up,
 I last throughout the day, and so lie down;
 The solitary lady of the duchess!
 And how I bear it! Wonderfully! Past
 Belief! I'll do't no longer! If I do,
 Then never was I born in Mantua. [Shouts.
 What's that?—[Looks out.]—The city all astir!—A crowd
 Before the palace—I will ope the casement:—
 I feel as I could leap into the street! [Opens casement.

Enter MARIANA.

Mari. What do you at the casement, Floribel?

Flo. Look from it, madam.

Mari. That I see. At what?

Flo. At crowds of happy people, madam,—

Some standing, others walking, others running;

All doing what they list—like merry birds

At liberty.

Mari. Come from the casement!—Shut it.

Flo. Nay, rather you approach it, madam! Do!

And look from't too—There's news, and from your lord!

Look—There's the courier!

Mari. [Approaching the window.] Where?

Flo. That cavalier,

Who tries to pass along, but cannot, so

The people press upon him.

Enter FERRARDO and ANTONIO.

Fer. [Aside to ANTONIO.] At the casement!

Mari. Who is that cavalier?

Flo. The courier, madam.

Mari. I know—but who is he?

His family—His name? I cannot take

My eyes from his face! who is he? Can't you tell?

I have a strange desire to know his name!

Fer. [Aside to ANTONIO.] Father!

Flo. I'll fly and learn it.

Mari. Do, good girl!

And soon as you have learn'd, fly back again!

[FLORIBEL goes out.]

Fer. [*Aside to ANTONIO.*] I pray you mark, but speak not—
 [*Approaches the window on tiptoe, returns, and speaks to himself.*]

It is Saint Pierre!

Incredible! [*To ANTONIO.*] It is the courier, father,
 Of whom they were discoursing.

Mari. I have lost him!

He has enter'd the palace—I should like again
 To see him—I should like to speak to him!

Fer. [*Aside to ANTONIO.*] My life on't, she will hold a court
 to-day—

Accost her, father.

Ant. Benedicite

Fair daughter.

Mari. Father!—What, his grace!—I think,
 Or I mistake, there's news from my dear lord?

Ant. Madam, there is, and happy news.—Your lord
 Has won another victory!

Fer. All Mantua

Would have a heart of overflowing joy,
 Would but your highness notify your will
 To let it speak its happiness, and pay
 Congratulations to you.—May I hope
 You do not pause from doubt? Your confessor
 Approves your highness somewhat should relax
 Your life of close seclusion.

Mari. [*After a pause.*] Be it so.

Fer. [*Aside to ANTONIO.*] I told you, father—

[*FLORIBEL re-enters.*]

Flo. Madam, he is call'd—

Fer. St. Pierre—You mean the courier
 That brought these happy tidings?

Mari. Floribel,

I want your aid. My lord, and reverend father,
 Soon as my toilet's made, I shall descend.

[*MARIANA and FLORIBEL go out.*]

Ant. What kind of man is this?

Fer. A kind of devil,

That grasps you with his eye—as fascinate
 Serpents, 'tis said, their prey.—A tongue to match,
 In glosing speech, the master-fiend himself!
 I'm troubled, father. Was the dame you spoke of
 Indeed a pattern, like my cousin's wife,
 Of saintly self-denial?

Ant. Yes, my son.

Fer. I grieve we urged her highness with her presence
 To grace the court to-day. I tremble for her.
 Come! Shall I tell thee something—No, I will not!
 When you can lead the sea, you'll sound the depth
 Of woman's art.—Would you believe it—No—
 While there's a doubt, suspicion should be dumb.
 Think'st thou I would have back'd her guardian's suit

But that I knew he had his reasons?—'Sdeath!
 What am I doing?—Come, your reverence,
 The man of proper charity condemns not,
 Except upon enforcement. All is right!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE III.—*A Room in the Palace.*

Enter FLORIO and COSMO.

Florio. Where is the regent?

Cos. With the confessor
 In the chamber of the duchess. Nay, my lord,
 He has quitted it, and is here.

Florio. You may withdraw.

[*COSMO goes out on one side. Enter FERRARDO on the other.*]

Fer. Well? where's St. Pierre?—I thought you were together!

Florio. We were, but parted for a moment. Fortune,
 In the task you set me, kindly has forestall'd me.

Halting to bait within some miles of this,
 He met a friend, whose hand he scarce had shaken
 Ere the ready dice were out. In brief, your grace,
 He has enter'd Mantua ducatless!—Of my own counsel
 I broke to him your need of his assistance,
 Touching your cousin's wife—and promised him—
 A pledge, I knew your highness will redeem—
 Replenish'd coffers, would he undertake
 To pleasure you.

Fer. Will he do it?

Florio. Sullenly,
 But fully he consented—He is here.

Fer. Retire a little.

[*Count retires.*]

Enter St. PIERRE.

Welcome, St. Pierre!—welcome my friend!—I'm glad
 To see you.

St. P. Would you take me for a knave?

Fer. What mean you?

St. P. Would you take me for a knave?

Fer. No.

St. P. No? Why then I'm fit to do your pleasure.
 Come!—To my work!—When am I to begin?

Fer. The matter?

St. P. I have lived an honest life
 These six months—Knavery is new to me!
 I set about it feverishly.

Fer. What!

Is't knavery to net a pretty woman?
 They catch birds so.

St. P. Pshaw!—I am past the time.

Fer. Mind is the brightness of the body—lights it,

When years, its proper but less subtle fire
 Begins to dim. Man, I could tell thee how
 She conn'd thy visage from her casement; sent
 Her confidante to learn thy name: seem'd lost
 At losing thee! Win thou discourse with her,
 And hold it when thou winn'st it.—'Twill content me
 Thou make her but the object of remark.
 Away! Go lean on yonder pedestal,
 And watch thy opportunity to draw
 Her notice towards thee—Thy obeisance does it;
 Or anything most slight; her lord's success
 Is plea that you accost her. She is new
 To the court,—a stranger to its law of distance,
 Which 'tis expedient thou infringe! Couldst master
 Aught that's about her person—say a ring,
 A brooch, a chain, in curiosity
 Besought of her for near inspection, then
 Mislaid or dropp'd—not to be found again,—
 It were a thousand ducats in thy hand!
 'Sdeath, man, hold up thy head, and look at Fortune,
 That smiles on thee, and asks thee to embrace her!
 What dost thou gaze at?

St. P. Who is that?

Fer. The duchess.

St. P. Indeed, a lady of surpassing beauty!

Fer. An irksome task, methinks, I've set you—Come!
 About it!—To thy post!

St. P. Surpassing fair!

[*Goes out.*]

Fer. [*Looking after him.*] He has caught her eye already,—
 excellent!

He bows to her! Does she curtsy?—yes, i' faith!
 And to the very ground! You're welcome, sir!
 He speaks to her! How takes she his advances?
 She entertains them! They pass on in converse!
 Hold it but on, she's lost!

[*FLORIO comes down.*]

Do you see?

Florio. So soon!

I wish him fortune! As I loved her once,
 I even loathe her now!

Fer. Could you believe it?

He crosses her, and straight her eye is caught!
 He speaks, and straight is master of her ear!
 Solace for baffled hopes! From infancy
 I loathed my cousin for his elder right,
 And leap'd into his seat with lighter spring,
 Than he, I thought, had miss'd it! He returns,
 And I, with humbled brow, in sight of all
 Descend, that he may mount! I'll pay him shame
 For shame;—but he shall have't with interest!
 Where is the confessor? I must to him.
 Mix with the company, and point to them
 The eye of questioning remark. With looks

Speak sentences!—More surely does not raise
 One wave another wave, than marvel grows
 On marvel.—Interjections have a world
 Of argument! “Incredible!”—“Odd!”—“Strange!”
 Will make a thousand hearers prick their ears,
 And conjure wonders out of commonest things!
 Then with commiseration you may do
 A murder easily! “Alack!” “Alas!”
 Use daggers that seem tears.—Away! Away!
 For now or never is the golden hour! [They go out.]

SCENE IV.—*Another Room in the Palace.*

Enter MARIANA and ST. PIERRE.

Mari. I thank you for the story of your travels:
 You make me wish to see the world, of which
 Such wonders you relate. I think you said,
 You were but newly come to Mantua?
 You must have been in Mantua before, then,
 So many seem to know you?

St. P. I have been
 Before in Mantua.

Mari. 'Tis very strange,
 But when I saw thee first, I felt as if
 We were of old acquaintance! have we met
 Before?

St. P. No, lady.

Mari. It is very strange,
 You never were in Switzerland?

St. P. Oh, yes!
 It is my birth-place.

Mari. Ay! so is it mine.

'Tis a dear country! never met we there?

St. P. No.

Mari. No? 'Tis odd! How many years is't, since
 You were in Switzerland?

St. P. Good fifteen years.

Mari. So long! I was an infant then—No—No!
 We have not met before—'Tis odd!—At least
 You are my countryman! [Holding out her hands to him.]

[Visitors have been occasionally crossing the stage during
 this scene, observing MARIANA and ST. PIERRE.]

Enter in the background, ANTONIO and FERRARDO.

Fer. Had I been told it,
 I would not have believed it.

Mari. Switzerland

Is a dear country! Switzerland!

St. P. It is
 The land of beauty, and of grandeur, lady,
 Where looks the cottage out on a domain

The palace cannot boast of. Seas of lakes,
 And hills of forests! crystal waves that rise
 'Midst mountains all of snow, and mock the sun,
 Returning him his flaming beams more thick
 And radiant than he sent them.—Torrents, there,
 Are bounding floods! and there the tempest roams
 At large, in all the terrors of its glory!
 And then our valleys! Ah, they are the homes
 For hearts! Our cottages, our vineyards, orchards!—
 Our pastures studded with the herd and fold!
 Our native strains that melt us as we sing them!
 A free—a gentle—simple—honest people!

Mari. I see them, signor,—I'm in Switzerland!
 I do not stand in Mantua!—Dear country!
 Except in one thing, I'm not richer, signor,
 Than when I was a child in Switzerland,
 And mistress only of this little cross.

[Pressing the cross to her breast.
St. P. [anxiously]. Your pardon, lady! Pray you let me see
 That cross again!

Mari. Right willingly.

Ant. [Coming forward.] Hence, signor!

Mari. Father!

Ant. I pray your grace retire—but first
 Command that libertine from the apartment!

St. P. [Sternly surveying alternately ANTONIO and FER-
 RARDO.] I go, your reverence, of mine own accord.

[Goes out, followed by FERRARDO.]

Mari. Father, what meant you by that word which turn'd
 My very blood to ice?

Ant. Behoves your highness
 To keep your eye upon your husband's honour,
 If not upon your own!

Mari. How!

Ant. Heaven alone
 Can judge the heart.—Men must decide by actions,
 And yours, to-night, to all have given offence.

Mari. Offence!

Ant. A woman hath in every state
 Most need of circumspection;—most of all
 When she becomes a wife!—She is a spring
 Must not be doubted; if she is, no oath
 That earth can utter will so purge the stream
 That men will think it pure!

Mari. Is this to me?

Ant. Women who play the wanton—

Mari. Father!

Ant. Daughter!

That look and tone of high command become
 Thy state indeed—

Mari. No, father, not my state—

They become me!—State greater—higher far,
 One who deserved that name I blush'd to hear—
 And thou, a reverend man, shouldst blush to use—
 Might fill! but though it were an empress's,
 I would defy her in her breast to seat
 The heart that's throned in mine!—If 'tis a crime
 To boast—Heaven pardon you—you have made me sin!

Ant. Behoves us heed appearances?

Mari. No, father,

Behoves us heed desires and thoughts, and let
 Appearances be what they may be!—You
 Shall never shape them so, that evil men
 Will not their own construction put upon them.

Father, it was the precept of my father,

Ant. He little knew the world.

Mari. He knew what's better,
 Heaven, and the smile of his own conscience!
 What have I done?

Ant. Given cause of scandal, daughter.

Mari. How?

Ant. By a preference, so mark'd, it drew
 The eyes of all upon you.

Mari. Evil eyes,
 To see defect in frank and open deeds!
 The gentleman appear'd mine old acquaintance—
 That drew me towards him:—I discover'd now
 He was my countryman—that makes allies
 Of even foes that meet in foreign lands,
 Then well may couple strangers!—He discoursed
 Of my dear native country, till its peaks
 Began, methought, to cleave the sky, as there
 They stood before me!—I was happy—pleased
 With him that made me so—With what a straw
 You raise a conflagration!

Ant. You forget
 You are not now the commissary's ward,
 But consort to the duke of Mantua.—
 You're a changed woman.

Mari. No, I faith, the same!
 My skin is not of other texture—This,
 My hand, is just the hand I knew before!
 If my glass tells the truth, the face and form
 I have to-day, I had to-day last year!
 My mind is not an inch the taller grown
 Than mellowing time hath made it in his course!
 And, for my heart—it beats not in my breast,
 If in the ducal chair of Mantua,
 'Tis not the same I had, when I did sit
 On some wild turret of my native hills,
 And burn with love and gratitude to Heaven
 That made a land so fair, and me its daughter!

Ant. Hear me!—You have wrong'd your lord!

Mari. I have wrong'd my lord!
How have I wrong'd my lord?

Ant. By entertaining
With mark'd and special preference, a man
Until to-day a perfect stranger to you.

Mari. Go on!

Ant. He is a libertine!

Mari. Go on!

Ant. A woman who has such a friend, has nought
To do with honest men!

Mari. Go on!

Ant. A wife
Has done with friends!—Her heart, had it the room
Of twenty hearts, her husband ought to fill,—
A friend that leaves not space for other friends,
Save such as nature's earliest warrant have
To house there!

Mari. You are right in that! Go on.

Ant. A court's a place where men have need to watch
Their acts and words not only, but their looks;
For prying eyes beset them round about,
That wait on aught but thoughts of charity.
What were thy words I know not; but thy acts
Have been the comment of the court to-day;
Of eyes that gaped with marvel—groups that stood
Gazing upon thee—leaning ears to lips,
Whose whispers, were their import known to thee,
Had stunn'd thee worse than thunder!

Mari. So! Go on.

Ant. What if they reach thy consort?

Mari. What!

Ant. Ay, What?

Mari. He'll spurn them as he ought; as I do spurn them.
For shame! for shame! Me thou shouldst not arraign,
But rather those who basely question me!
Father, the heart of innocence is bold!
Tell me how comes your court to harbour one
Whom I should blush to speak to? If its pride
Be not the bearing that looks down on vice,
What right has it to hold its head so high?
Endure, at court, what, from our cottage door,
My father would have spurn'd!—If that's your court,
I'll be nor slave nor mistress of your court!
Father, no more! E'en from thy reverend lips
I will not hear what I've no right to list to!
What!—taint my lord with question of my truth!
Could he who proved my love on grounds so broad,
As I have given my lord; on grounds so mean
Descend to harbour question of my love—
Though brok'd my heart in the disseverment,
He were no longer lord or aught of mine!

Father, no more! I will not hear thee! Frown—
Heaven does not frown!—To Heaven I turn from thee.

Ant. This confidence offends me.—Swerving virtue
Endureth not rebuke! while that, that's steadfast,
With smiling patience suns the doubt away,
Wherewith mistrust would cloud it! 'Tis not right—

An eye so firm-resentful—speech so lofty—
MARIANA enters unperceived, and kneels to him.

An air of such defiance—

Mari. Father!

Ant. Daughter!

Mari. I am thy daughter! O my father, bless me!

Were I the best, I were not 'bove thy charity,

Were I the worst, I should not be beneath it!

Ant. Thou hast my blessing.

Mari. Ere I break my fast

To-morrow, father, I'll confess to thee,

And thou shalt know how little or how much.

I merit what thou givest me! so, good night!

Ant. Good night, fair daughter. Benedicite!

[They go out severally.]

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—A Street.

Enter BARTOLO, BERNARDO, CARLO, and others.

Bar. Hush, signors! speak softly! 'Tis treason, and we
may be hanged for it.—So the matter stands! The young
duchess, I fear me, is an old sinner—and what a saint she
looked! Let no man marry a wife who looks like a saint!
Please Providence, mine shall be as ill-favoured as Satan's!

Ber. 'Tis the way to make sure of a wife.

Bar. It is, signor. Such is the value of beauty. Let any
man take his own case. Now myself, for instance—How
many a scrape should I have avoided, had I been born as ill-
favoured as some people! He is the happiest man, be
assured, whom no one has reason to envy.—Now, thou art a
happy man, Bernardo.

Ber. I thank you, Signor Bartolo.

Car. But when happened this?

Bar. I told you it happened about half an hour ago.

Ber. Prithee, signor, tell it us again?

Bar. Well then, draw near; but remember you are sworn to secrecy.

All. We are, we are!

Bar. You know I am fond of the news—though I have as little curiosity as any man. Well, where can one get news if not at the palace? So, to the palace I went this morning, as I do every morning.—Few persons have constant admittance at the palace, as I have, for they are people of discretion at the palace, and suffer not rogues that come peeping and prying—spies and blabbers—scoundrels of no trust or honesty—but I have admittance to the palace, for they know me.

Ber. Well!

Bar. When I entered it, all was confusion! One running this way, another that way. One whispering this person, and every one with wonder in his looks! I warrant you I did not look the figure of wonder too!

Car. Go on, good Bartolo.

Bar. Well: I happen to have a friend or two at the palace—Lucky for me that I have so—There is no doing anything there without a friend.—“Would that such a one was here,” said I to myself; and scarce had I said it, when in runs the very man I was thinking of.

Ber. Excellent!

Bar. Just in the nick of time, or I verily believe I should have died of wonder. At the same time, every one knows I am the least curious man in all Mantua. Well, in runs my friend, just in the nick of time.—“The matter?” cried I. “Treason,” whispered he, “but I dare not breathe it for my life.”—“What is it?” said I; “I’ll be as mute as the marble under my feet.”—“You shall hear it,” cried he, “for you are a lad of discretion, and have a guard upon your tongue.” You see, signors, that I have a character at the palace!

Ber. Go on, Bartolo.

Bar. Well! as I told you before, the substance was this—and nothing more nor less. Julian St. Pierre, who has lately returned to the court, and for his wild practices would have been dismissed from it many a year ago, but for the favour of the duke Ferrardo,—this Julian St. Pierre, I say, was half an hour ago discovered stealing from the ante-room that leads to the duchess’s chamber, and secured upon the spot.

Ber. and Carlo. Go on!

Bar. I have no more to tell you—You know as much as I do.—But be discreet! A silent tongue betokens a wise head! I cannot stay with you longer. I have some friends in the next street to see; others in the street beyond!—more again, in the street beyond that! I know not how many I have to see! I have the whole city to see! Now be discreet!—remember I got it as I give it, on promise of secrecy.—Be discreet!—discovered half an hour ago, stealing from the ante-room that leads to the duchess’s chamber!—Be discreet, I say—A silent tongue, a wise head!—Be discreet.—Be discreet!

[They go out severally.]

SCENE II.—*Ante-Room, leading to the Duchess's Apartment.**Enter MARIANA.*

Mari. Or I have had sweet dreams, whose fleeting forms
 Have but the charm of their fair visit left;
 Or by my couch hath some good angel watch'd,
 And on my lapsed unconscious spirit breathed
 The balmy fragrance of his heavenly presence;
 So light my heart, as it were clad with wings
 And floated in the sun! My lord—My lord!—
 How is this? 'Tis strange! At thought of my dear lord,
 My soaring heart hath dropp'd at once to earth.
 It is the incidents of yesternight
 The thought of him recalls!—I feel as though
 I fear'd my lord!—Or is't the world I fear?
 The world which yesternight I dared defy;
 But now begin to think upon its snares,
 And feel, as they beset me round, so thick,
 I cannot step, but in their fatal mesh,
 I'm straight entangled! Wherefore feel I thus?
 My heart as heavy as, just now, 'twas light!

Enter ANTONIO.

My confessor! Here's comfort! Welcome, father.—
 For mercy's sake what's this? I welcome thee,
 And thou, to me, giv'st aught, but an all hail!
 Why what's the matter?—Can I be awake?
 Father, I need kind looks and words to-day,—
 My heart is sick!—O earth, how sick! I look'd
 For thee to bring me peace—Alack—Alack!
 Why do your eyes of mercy turn to swords?
 Only they pierce where feeling is more quick!
 Father, be pitiful! 'Tis not the proud
 And forward wife that brav'd thee, yesternight;
 But thy repentant child that kneels to thee!

Ant. Repentance is a grace—but it is one
 That grows upon deformity—fair child
 To an unsightly mother!—Nor, indeed,
 Always a grace!—'Tis oftentimes—too oft—
 The bootless terror of the stranded soul,
 When ebbing passion leaves it all alone,
 Upon the bleak and dreary shoal of sin!—
 So is't of different kinds—Which kind is thine?

Mari. Father!*Ant.* Thy lord!—Thy lord!*Mari.* What of my lord?*Ant.* Nay, rather answer thou, what of thy lord?

I know that he is duke of Mantua,
 Noble and, fair, and good!—hath high allies!—
 Heads the proud war, in wisdom, as in arms,
 The foremost plume of the van!—and, crown of all,

I know he thinks himself, of every wish
Which heaves that breast of thine, the paramount,
The happy lord!

Mari. He *thinks* himself—

Ant. And presses

The 'larum-curtain'd couch of restless war,
In hopes to change it for that downy one
Whereon he left, as he imagined, safe,
His dearest honour, by thy side reposing,—
And little dreams that stain has reach'd it there!

Mari. That stain has reach'd it there!

Ant. You slept alone
Last night?

Mari. I slept alone?—Yes, Father!—Slept alone!

What idle words are these?—I slept alone?

I know I slept alone last night!—the night

Before!—the night preceding that!—alone?

How could I otherwise than sleep alone,

When my dear lord's away?

Ant. Thou lookest—

Mari. How?

Ant. And speakest—

Mari. How?—How do I look and speak?

Ant. Like innocence.

Mari. Doubt'st thou my innocence?

Ant. They say,
Thou didst not sleep alone!

Mari. Who say so?

Ant. All

The palace.

Mari. They!—I cannot speak the word,

Which indicates the acting of a part,

Unparallel'd in shame!

Ant. Another part,

The which involves a tenfold deeper shame,

Men freely name, and lay to thy account!

Mari. Art thou my friend?

Ant. Hast thou not proved me so?

Mari. I have! Forgive me that I question'd thee!

But when I know my heart's supreme content

In its own clearness—not as to act alone,

But wish; nor wish, alone, but thought of sin;

When I know this, and think of yesternight;

And, worse than yesternight, turns out to-day,

I 'gin to think the world is made of nate,

And doubt if thou—e'en thou!—art not my foe!

Oh, do not be my foe! indeed—indeed!

The helpless maid that hung upon thy robe

To beg protection, and received it there;

Unchanged in all—save that she's now a wife,

And, as a wife, more bound than e'er to Heaven—

In strait more piteous than she knelt in then,

Clings, kneeling to it now! What's said of me?
And on what ground?—for not the robe I hold
Less conscious is of ground for foul report,
Than I am!

Ant. Left thy chamber any one
This morning, whom thy honour should forbid
To cross its threshold?

Mari. No!

Ant. Art thou sure? 'Tis said
There did—The man was seen!

Mari. The man?

Ant. The man!

Departing from this ante-chamber!—this,
Which none except thy lord, myself, and those
Who wait upon thy person, may frequent.

Mari. Who was the man?

Ant. Seen in the very act
Of slinking from your door!

Mari. Who was the man?

Ant. The same that, last night, held thee in discourse!

Mari. I am lost!

Ant. You're lost?

Enter FERRARDO, LORENZO, COSMO, and others.

Fer. Your highness, with your leave,
We'll pass into your chamber.

[FERRARDO and LORENZO pass in, the others remain.]

Ant. You are lost!

Mari. I'm lost—but I am innocent!

Fer. [Returning with LORENZO.] My lords,
You know who owns this scarf?

Cos. It is St. Pierre's!

Fer. 'Twas found beneath the couch—our advocate
Of state it was that saw it there. Are ye satisfied?

Cos. We are, your grace; but would 'twere otherwise.

Ant. Find earth where grows no weed; and you may find
A heart wherein no error grows: I thought
Thy heart without one—thought it was a garden
So thickly set with flowers, no weed had room

To shoot there! Who would sin, who knew how shame
Confounds the trespasser! I cannot stay,—

My tears be vouchers for me that I loved her,
And fain would doubt the lapse I must allow. [Goes out.]

Fer. My worthy friends, follow the confessor.
I wish to speak in private with her highness.

[LORENZO, COSMO, and LORDS, go out.]

I am your friend!—You are accused of treason,—

The grounds against you are conclusive ones;

Your judges will be those who will not spare!

And soon and summary will be your trial;

The penalty of your offence is death!

You are now a prisoner—I pity you—

Would save you!—Will!—As soon as dusk sets in,
In a convenient spot without the town,
To which in secret you shall be convey'd,
I shall have horses waiting—

[*MARIANA shrieks and starts up from her knee, on which she had remained in a state of mental stupefaction.*]

Hush!

Mari. For flight?

Fer. For flight!—By dawn you shall be far away
From Mantua.

Mari. At dusk?

Fer. At dusk. As soon
As dusk begins to fall, expect me here,
And thou shalt have supply of gold enough
To pay the charges of thy journey—yea,
Maintain thee in abundance where thou wilt.

Mari. I may depend upon thee?

Fer. Fear me not.

Remember now—At dusk.

Mari. I will!—At dusk.

[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE III.—*Another Chamber in the Palace.*

Enter FERRARDO.

Fer. His heart is in my power as 'twere a thing,
Which in my hand I held and I could crush
With a grasp! Nor can it 'scape my power! her name—
That flower of woman's pride, which ta'en away,
From a bright paragon she turns a thing
For basest eyes to look askant upon—
Is blasted past the power of friend or lover
To bring it to its pristine hue again.
Now for St. Pierre—He also must, to-night,
Take leave of Mantua. [*Unlocks door.*] Come forth, my friend!

Enter ST. PIERRE.

Dost thou not know me? What an air is this?
A king could not a loftier assume
At high offence! 'Twas thus with thee last night.
Nothing but moody looks, until the count
With much persuasion woo'd you to our feast.
I wonder'd at thee!

St. P. Are we alone?

Fer. How's this?

St. P. Are we alone?—Where are the craven minions
That overpower'd me in the corridor,
And at thy bidding dragg'd me hither?

Fer. Pshaw!

Art thou no wiser than to heed them? know'st not 'Twas done on my instruction—mine—thy friend's?

St. P. Are we alone?

Fer. We are alone.

St. P. Art sure

That door is unattended? that no minions Watch it without?

Fer. I am.

St. P. Wilt lock it?

Fer. [*Locking it and returning.*] There!

St. P. [*Springing upon him.*] Villain!

Fer. What means this violence?

St. P. You struck me!

When I contended with the recreants—
Who smite this moment what the one before
They fawn'd upon!—across their arms you struck,
And fell'd me with the blow!—Now take it back!

Fer. Stop! you'll repent it if you strike!

St. P. I tell thee,

I ne'er received a blow from mortal man
But 'twas return'd with interest!—One by one
I have parted—thanks to thee!—with all those virtues
Which wise and holy men inculcate! Not
One grace I now am master of, save one
That ever was my own! That single grace
Remains—the growth of nature—the true shoot
Abuse could not eradicate, and leave
The trunk and root alive!—that virtue—manhood!
Still lives, within my heart, disdain of threat,
Defiance of aggression, and revenge
For contumely.—Come!—You struck me!—Come!
I must have blow for blow!

Fer. [*Drawing his dagger.*] Let fall thy hand
Upon my person—lo, my dagger's free,
And I shall sheathe it in thy heart!

St. P. I care not,
So I die quits with thee!

Fer. I would not kill thee,
So don't advance thy hand! Nay, listen first,
And then, if thou wilt, strike me!—Strike!—abuse
Thy friend, who, when he struck thee, was thy friend
As much as he is now, or ever was;
Who struck thee, but that he might seem thy foe,
To hide how much, indeed, he was thy friend!
Nay, if the lack of quittance for a blow
Which but in show was one—for the intent
Establishes the act—must make us foes,
My dagger's up!—Now give a blow, indeed.
For one that seem'd but one.

St. P. I take't, in thought,
And let thy person unprofan'd go!

Fer. No animal, so wild, it will not tame,
Save man! Come, calm thyself!—Sit down!—As yet
Thou know'st not whether to caress thy friend
Or tear him! Shouldst thou tear him? Come, sit down.
There's not a man in Italy save thee
Would fret, and be the master, all at once,
Of good ten thousand ducats! Still a brow!
Odd's man, be merry!—Rub thy hands and laugh!
Thou art rich!—look there! [*Showing a casket.*]

St. P. How came I yesternight
To sleep in the chamber of the duke? And why
This morning when I left the ante-room
Was I assaulted by thy minions?

Fer. Pshaw!
Enough, thou slepst where thou didst sleep, next chamber
To the duke's wife, and thereby madest thy fortune.
For every ducat of the sum I named
Is thine—but render me one service more!

St. P. Name it.

Fer. Just write for me in boasting vein,
Confession thou didst pillow yesternight
There, where the honour of the duke forbids
That head save his should lie.
Why do you gaze? 'Tis easily done!

St. P. It is.

Fer. It takes but pen and ink, and here they are;
Make use of time! The hour that is not used
Is lost, and might have been the luckiest,
Converted to account. What ponder'st thou?

St. P. The manner best to execute thy wish.
I'm hardly in the vein! 'Twould put me into't
Wouldst thou relate the means whereby I came
To lie in the duke's chamber?

Fer. 'Twould retard thee!

St. P. No! It will rather help me. When I write,
Ofttimes I miss the thought, too much intent
On finding it,—looking at something else,
Lo, there it stands before me of itself!
How came I in the chamber of the duke?

Fer. You supp'd, you may remember, with the count
And me?

St. P. I do.

Fer. 'Twas plann'd between us.

St. P. Well?

Fer. And for our end we kept the revel up—
I mean the count and I—for, as I said
Before, thou wast not in the joyous vein,—
Till all the palace had retired to rest.

St. P. My lord, may't please you stop—My thought has
come. [*Writes.*]

A fair commencement! excellent! most fair!
You see how much you help me!—There!—Go on!

You revell'd till the palace was at rest—
What then?

Fer. Why, then, finding thee jealous still
Of the kindly grape, we drugg'd your cup; and, when
The potion work'd, convey'd you in your sleep,—
To sound or stir, profound as that of death,—
Into the chamber of the duke—of the key
Of which I keep a duplicate—and there
We laid you in his bed.

St. P. Break off again
While I go on!—You see, my lord, how great
A help you are to me! It comes as fast
As though I were inditing what your grace
Rehearses to me.—So!—Most excellent!
And now proceed again!

Fer. Where left I off?

St. P. How can I tell, intent on what's on hand,
I list to you; but 'tis abstractedly,
A man will sing and work; but more he heeds
His work than song!—And yet I think, your grace,
When you left off, was putting me—somewhere—
To bed—

Fer. You're right!—in the duke's bed! Thou slep'st there,
With a partition, only, 'twixt his wife
And thee—and that made frailer by a door,—
The lock of which I from its use absolved;
And casting, 'neath her highness' couch, thy scarf,
As proof of closer neighbourhood to her,
Withdrew to feast on foretaste of revenge.

St. P. Enough!

Fer. Enough?

St. P. Tut, tut! I only meant
Your highness to break off, while I resum'd.
My thoughts flow on, again—Better and better!
Your grace,—a hundred ducats, I have donè
Almost as soon as you—[*Writes and stops, again.*—Go on—

What end

Proposed you highness to yourself by this?

Fer. To blast her name, and in the death of that
Involve my cousin's life! Accordingly,
By my direction wert thou watch'd and seized,
And hither brought, as partner in a crime,
Whose penalty is death!—which thou shalt 'scape!—
'Scape with enrich'd life—so ne'er again
Thou show'st thy face in Mantua, and keep'st
Thy counsel.

St. P. [*Writing.*] Have you done?

Fer. I have.

St. P. And so

Have I. [*Peruses the writing.*] A fair commencement! better
far

Continuation! and the winding up

The fairest of the whole !—Howe'er, of that
Your highness must be judge. [*Hands the writing, but suddenly*
checks himself.] 'Sdeath ! here's a word

I did not mean to write, for one I wanted !

I needs must take it out,—I pray your highness

Lend me a knife.

Fer. I have not one.

St. P. Well then

Your dagger—if the edge of it is sharp.

Fer. There 'tis.

St. P. And there is the confession, duke ;

Sign it.

Fer. Why this is my confession !

St. P. Ay !

Indeed ! your highness.

Fer. Word for word.

St. P. You'll own

I'm something of a clerk—I hardly hoped

It would have pleased your highness !—My lord duke,

Sign the confession !

Fer. Why ?

St. P. It pleases me.

If that contents thee not, I'm in thy power,

And I'd have thee in mine !—Your highness sees

I'm frank with you.

Fer. Can it be you, St. Pierre ?

St. P. No—It is you !—and not the peasant lad,

Whom fifteen years ago, in evil hour,

You chanced to cross upon his native hills,—

In whose quick eye you saw the subtle spirit

Which suited you, and tempted it ; who took

Your hint, and follow'd you to Mantua

Without his father's knowledge—his old father !

Who, thinking that he had a prop in him

Man could not rob him of, and Heaven would spare ;

Bless'd him one night, ere he laid down to sleep,

And waking in the morning found him gone !

[*FERRARDO attempts to rise.*

Move not, or I shall move !—You know me !

Fer. Nay,

I'll keep my seat. St. Pierre, I train'd thee like

A cavalier !

St. P. You did—You gave me masters,

And their instructions quickly I took up

As they could lay them down !—I got the start

Of my contemporaries !—not a youth

Of whom could read, write, speak, command a weapon,

Or rule a horse, with me !—You gave me all—

All the equipments of a man of honour,—

But soon you found a use for me, and made

A slave, a profligate, and pander of me ! [*FERRARDO about to rise.*

I charge you keep your seat !

Fer. You see I do !

St. Pierre, be reasonable !—you forget.

There are ten thousand ducats.

St. P. Give me, duke,

The eyes that look'd upon my father's face !

The hands that help'd my father to his wish !

The feet that flew to do my father's will !

The heart that bounded at my father's voice !

And say that Mantua were built of ducats,

And I could be its duke at cost of these,

I would not give them for it ! Mark me, duke !

I saw a new-made grave in Mantua,

And on the head-stone read my father's name :—

To seek me, doubtless, hither he had come—

To seek the child that had deserted him—

And died here, ere I knew it. Heaven, alone,

Can tell how far he stray'd in search of me !

Upon that grave I knelt an alter'd man ;

And rising thence, I fled, nor had return'd,

But tyrant hunger drove me back again

To thee—to thee !—My body to relieve

At cost of my dear soul ! I have done thy work,

Do mine ! and sign me that confession straight.

I'm in thy power, and I'll have thee in mine !

Fer. Art thou indeed in earnest ?

St. P. Look in my eyes.

Fer. St. Pierre, perhaps I have underpaid thee ?

St. P. Sign !

Fer. I'll double the amount !

St. P. Come, sign !

Fer. St. Pierre,

Will forty thousand ducats please thee ?

St. P. There's

The dial, and the sun is shining on it—

The shadow on the very point of twelve—

My case is desperate ! Your signature

Of moment is most vital to my peace !

My eye is on the dial ! Pass the shadow

The point of noon, the breadth of but a hair

As can my eye discern—and, that unsign'd,

The steel is in thy heart—I speak no more !

Fer. Saint Pierre !—Not speak—Saint Pierre !

St. P. Is it sign'd ?

Fer. [*Writing hurriedly.*] It is.

St. P. Your signet, as a proof that I'm at large.

Now take my station in that closet—No

Attempt at an alarm—In, in, I say !

Hold wind we'll make the port.

[*Opens the chamber-door—seems to recognise some one without, makes a profound bow, as though to the duke.*

I thank your highness !

[*Goes out.*

ACT V.

SCENE THE LAST.—*A Tent.*LEONARDO and *Soldiers discovered.*

Leon. Indeed, a glorious close! Our brief campaign
Has pass'd like sport upon a summer's day,
Without a cloud—a game, where fortune lay;
All on one lucky side—and that was ours!
Give order for the striking of our tents
At earliest dawn—I'll but salute the sun,
And straight for Mantua! [*Soldiers go out.*]

O sweet the sight
Of his dear native land to him, who brings
A brow, with honours laden, back to it!
Dear Mantua, that twice has given me life;
Once in the breath which first I drew in it,
Now in the gift, without the having which
That breath were given in vain! How does my wife?
Bright crown of my bright fortunes! O, my heart—
How does my love?—The plume of victory
Though won, I wear not till I see it nod
In the bright mirror of her glistening eye.
When shall that be?—To-morrow?—Blest to-morrow!
Would—would thou wast to-day!

Enter Second Officer.

Officer. Your cousin, and the nobles who compose
Your highness' council, with your confessor,
And advocate of state, attend without—in haste, and new
From Mantua.

Leon. The tidings of our truce
Can scarce have reach'd them, yet? Bad news flies quick,
I deem'd not good could boast so swift a wing.
Admit them.

Enter FERRARDO, FLORIO, ANTONIO, LORENZO, and Nobles.

Welcome, cousin—Welcome, all!
Note of our victory, I see, has reach'd you;
And ye are come to give me greeting, which
I gladly should have journey'd to receive.
But where's my duchess? She had been, methinks,
A fair addition to your cavalcade—
You might have brought her with you.

[*To FERRARDO, who drops his eyes.*]

Strangers yet!—
Nay, then, the fault, I'm positive, is yours.
Had but you dropp'd a hint of your intent,
Given but a glance of invitation to her;
She would have ta'en it, as from a thoughtful friend,

Given you her hand, and thank'd you for the leave
To bear you company.

Fer. Your highness' pardon;
A man can't help his doubts, e'en if he would;
And I have grounds, and solid ones, for mine.

Leon. Fie, fie, offend in any other thing,
And ere you ask you're pardon'd! Here are friends—
Friends of my love's and mine—tried friends!—and, yet,
Not friends in this—to leave my wife behind,
Who loves me best; when they, in zeal of love
Are here to give me joy of my high fortune.
How does my lady, friend? [*To Lor.*] How does she, father?
Why comes she not to greet me? You should be
Her harbingers—a step or two before?
Or bring ye charge from her to expedite
My long'd return to Mantua? as if
My heart were not remembrancer enough!
For never speed me, Heaven, if life seems life,
Until I stand in her sweet sight again.

Why whisper ye? [*FERRARDO and FLORIO whisper*
And ye do whisper, too— [*ANTONIO and LORENZO whisper.*

Hah! By your looks, I noted not before,
Ye come to tell me of disaster!—Speak!
The sum on't? Is it heavy?—What is it?
Come, name me the amount! Is it my dukedom?
Or what?—'Tis nothing of my wife?—Say that—
And say ought else which stern misfortune wills!
Blow wind! mount wave!—No rock to shut me thence,
I see the strand to run my bark ashore,
And smile upon my shipwreck.

Fer. 'Tis of her
We come to speak.

Leon. 'Tis no mishap to her—
For you appear to speak in wrath, not grief.
If what you come to say affects reproach—
Reproach of her! speak out!—Speak ye the truth,
Ye cannot speak in anger!

Fer. That our duty
Permitted us to leave you in that mind!

Leon. Pshaw! do thy duty!—be it duty—'Tis
Beyond your power of other mind to make me.

Fer. Thy lady is false to thee.

Leon. [*Drawing.*] Thy tongue is false
To thee!—It puts thy life in jeopardy;
Recall thy words or die!

Florio. My gracious liege,
He speaks the truth!

Leon. Thou too!

Lor. Your highness' patience.
What speaks your cousin, fain would I deny,
But cannot.

Leon. Sirs! I only doubt which way
To point my sword!

Ant. Your highness——

Leon. What say'st thou?

Speak out, thou reverend man!—There only wants
Thy charitable tongue, to prove how prone
Are mankind to allege defect, where e'en
The shadow on't was never seen before!
Say on!—Yet, ere thou speak'st convince thyself
That she, who loved me, when a noteless man;
And loved me still, when she believed me lost;
And loved me on, when woo'd by rank and wealth;
And, ere she'd yield to their enforced suit,
Was ready to become the bride of death!—
Convince thyself, I say, that finding me—
Finding me still returning love for love,
With rank, revenues, that she dream'd not of;
And wedded to me, mistress of my all,
This moment—Yet the very next, she swerved
And cast herself, and me, and all away!
Impossible!—Unimaginable! Now,
Say on and shame thyself!

Ant. My gracious liege,
Restrain your ire at what you would not hear,
And audience give to what you ought to hear.
If facts, avouch'd by eyes, may be believed,
I say, that would not say it—thou art wrong'd!
Peruse that paper—There you have our grounds
For saying what we say.

Lor. O read, my liege!
Think, 'tis our duty speaks, and what it says,
Says at the cost of our unfeign'd love,—
Which, sooner than mischance should undermine
Thy towering happiness, would be itself
The seaward mole, to meet the rushing wave
And break its fury ere it bursts on thee!
But wind and tide together setting in
Will, sometimes, overwhelm all obstacles—
So needs must fall this heavy surge on thee
Which we let o'er, in'drowning.

Leon. I read it, sir,
Not that I do fear it—or give credence to it.

Fer. Your highness sees how hinges fact on fact.

Leon. No!—I see nothing!

Fer. Nothing!

Leon. Not a jot

That might not be contrived, and against which
Improbability doth not set its face!
My lord—my lord—you love me not—nor you—
Nor you.—I doubt if any loves me here!
I doubt all things but that my wife is true!
I will to Mantua, this very hour,
To crave her pardon that I listen'd to you.

Fer. My lord, she's fled from Mantua.

Leon. She is what?

Fer. She's fled from Mantua, as also is
Her paramour.

Leon. Recall that word, or else
Thou makest me do a murder! Is she fled?
Cousin, thou murder'st me! Speaks he the truth?
Gainsay him, and I heed not what ye say!
Cousin, thou didst but hear that she was fled,
Thou dost not speak from thine own knowledge?

Fer. Else
I had not spoken.

Leon. Fled?—In company?—

Fer. What else could I infer?

Leon. Thou but inferr'st it,
Come then, all's well!—Let her be fled or not,
She has fled perhaps to friends, perhaps to me!

Enter Second Officer, with MARIANA.

Second Officer. My liege, the duchess.

Leon. Ha! I told you so!

Welcome, my loved!—my wrong'd!—my innocent!

Welcome, my loyal wife!

Mari. My liege, stand off!
Embrace me at the peril of your honour!

Your cousin here?—The count?—Your confessor?

And he?—and these the members of your council?

My tongue may spare its labour then! Yet whose

So fit to tell my husband, he's the lord

Of a dishonour'd bed,—as hers, whose heart,—

That ne'er admitted thought of man save him,

Knew not its part that was not given to him,

Before itself as dearer heart set him,

Sun, earth, life, health, desire, knew nought but him,—

Yet could not guard the jewel, paramount,

Of him it loved so well, but by an act—

Without a motive—monstrous to belief—

Which reason unto madness would refer—

Nay doubt that even madness' self could do!

Whom it so loved, did spoil, and bring at once

From proudest wealth to basest penury!

Leon. No!—Thou didst never swerve!—Truth dwells in
thee!

Thou art all radiant with it!

Mari. Not a doubt!

My trusting lord! my loved and honour'd lord!

Leon. [*Endeavouring to raise her.*] Up to my heart!

Mari. No—by thy love!

Leon. I say

I'll have thee up!—Thy place is here!

Mari. [*Preventing him.*] My lord!

What holds that paper?—Tell me, is it not
My accusation? Let me see it. [*Reads.*] True
From first to last.—The fact's not otherwise
Than here set down. Wouldst take me to thy heart,
And this against me?

Leon. Yes!

Mari. Nay, speak again,
And think before you speak! Say that the duke,
Your cousin, loves you not! Say that the count
Still bears you grudge!—Say these, the members of
Your highness' council, are suborn'd by them!—
Here stand two honest men who take their side!
Wouldst take me to thy heart, and this against me?

Leon. I would.

Mari. And if you would, you should not do it!

Leon. 'Tis a plot!

Mari. It is!—

But thou, my lord, must prove it to be one!
Else it hath oped a chasm, 'twixt thee and me,
Which, till thou close it up, or bridge it o'er
With stable-footed truth, that all may trust,
May not be cross'd.—Leap it—and all is lost!

Leon. Canst give me clue to find it out?

Mari. Methinks

I can. Thy cousin counsell'd me to fly,
To 'scape, as he alleged, the penalty
Of my imputed crime,—but, as I thought,
To furnish of that crime conclusive proof!—
Supplied me, too, with ample store of gold!

Leon. Traitor! I see it all—and do not you?
My cousin and my subject though thou art,
To solemn mortal combat I defy thee!
That from thy lips, at point of my true sword;
Admission I extort of an attempt
To slur my lady's honour!—for thy soul
No shriving knows, no healing speech with priest,
Till by confession it heaves off that sin.
Come forth!

Mari. No! no! let me be guilty thought,
But, oh! in peril, place not thou thy life!
Or let me prove, myself, my innocence
By ordeal of poison or of fire.
Do aught but put thy life in jeopardy!

Leon. And she could injure me!

Fer. It is the trick

Of lapséd virtue to affect excess,
Which sound desert would sooner suffer wrong,
Than claim pretension to.

Leon. It is the trick

Of villany to lie! Come forth!

Fer. Lead on!

Mari. [*Embracing his knees.*] My lord! my lord! my husband!

Leon. Loose thine arms!

Mari. It is mine heart-strings hold thee, not mine arms.
Wilt snap them? If thou wilt, thou hast a right,
They are thine own!—but wilt thou use that right?

Leon. Take her away!

Mari. When fails our dearest friend,
There may be refuge with our direst foe! [*Rushing up to FER.*
Oh! why art thou my foe? how lies my peace
Between thy good and thee? Is it thy good
To slay my peace? Wilt thou not look upon me?
Alas! thine eyes are better turn'd away!
For gazing on them, human as they are,
I have a feeling of a heart of stone!
And from my hopeless tears the spirit flies,
That frozen on my lids I feel them hang!
Thou rock! Affliction, did I plead to thee—
I turn'd from thee, Despair!

Leon. Come forth!

Fer. Lead on!

Enter ST. PIERRE behind.

Mari. No way to hold thee from thy bloody purpose?
Stop!—Thou wilt do a murder! Art thou sure
Thy wife is innocent? Thou know'st not what
Thou go'st to do! Whate'er befalls, the sin
Of all the deed 'tis I must answer for—
The hapless wife that on thy house and thee
Brought ruin!—Have compassion on her soul,
If not upon thy own!—Yet hear me!—Stop—
I'll put an end to all!—I am—

Fer. Guilty!

Mari. No!

To save thy life—my own—and his that's heart
Unto my life—I cannot speak the lie!

Leon. And if thou couldst, I'd not believe thy tongue—
Though Truth's as soon would lie.

Fer. No tongue on earth
Can clear her!—She is false!—To eyes and ears
Convicted!—She is an adulteress!

St. P. [*Rushing forward.*] Liar!
She is as true as thou art false!

Fer. A caitiff
That robb'd me once, and put my life in peril—
But I'll be quits with him!

Leon. Prevent him!

[*Several interfere, but not until ST. PIERRE is wounded.*]

St. P. Not

Quite home, your grace—yet near, I hope, enough!
Your highness, 'tis a dying man you hear;
Your wife is innocent!

Fer. A poor gallant
That would not say as much!

St. P. Your highness, read
This paper!—Hold his grace!

Fer. 'Twas forced from me.

St. P. Only the signature, my lord—The rest
Was voluntary—word for word, what fell
From his own lips!

Fer. You pass'd the night beside her—
Alone—none near you—within whisper of her!
Find pen to draw 'cross that!

St. P. I pray your highness,
Wears not your wife a little rustic cross,
Carved by no craftsman's hand?

Mari. I do!—the same—
I show'd thee when we spoke together.

St. P. 'Twas
Your brother gave it you.

Mari. It was.

St. P. I think,
Some fifteen years ago?

Mari. So many years
Have pass'd since that dear brother gave it me.
I was a child then—he almost a man!

St. P. You woke one morning, did you not, and saw
That brother standing, weeping by your bed:
He bless'd you, put that cross upon your neck,
Kiss'd you, and bade farewell to you, and went—
You never saw him more. Pray you come near!
O God! my mother's face!

Mari. My brother—Ambrose!

St. P. Yes, Mariana!

Fer. It's a masque, your highness,
They've got up to amuse you!

Leon. Hence with him!

The count too! [*Soldiers bear off FERRARDO and Count.*]

Mari. Brother, I said I knew thee! Thou forgott'st
Thy sister's little face to woman's gown;
But I remember'd thine enough to feel
'Twas something once had been familiar—dear!

O that my memory had better kept
What my heart treasured—thou didst prove how well!
Wilt thou not speak to me? Hear'st thou, my brother?

St. P. Our father's cottage, Mariana!

Mari. Ha!

Thou faintest!

St. P. No—it is nothing, sister!
What makes thee look so pale and vanishing?
Don't go from me!—Alas—'tis I am going!

I have confess'd myself! Pray for me, sister!
Mine eyes have lost thee!—But I feel thee still,

That's comfort!—yet—I have thee in my arms—

Thou fadest too from them—fast! fast!—Thou art gone!

[*St. PIERRE dies.*]

EPILOGUE,

WRITTEN BY CHARLES LAMB.

SPOKEN BY MISS ELLEN TREE.

WHEN first our Bard his simple will express'd,
That I should in his Heroine's robes be dress'd,
My fears were with my vanity at strife,
How I could act that untried part—a "Wife."
But Fancy to the Grison hills me drew,
Where Mariana like a wild flower grew,
Nursing her garden-kindred : so far I
Liked her condition, willing to comply
With that sweet single life : when, with a cranch,
Down came that thundering, crashing avalanche,
Startling my mountain-project ! "Take this spade,"
Said Fancy, then ; "dig low, adventurous Maid,
For hidden wealth." I did ; and, Ladies, lo ! }
Was e'er romantic female's fortune so, }
To dig a life-warm lover from the—snow ? }

A wife and Princess see me next, beset
With subtle toils, in an Italian net ;
While knavish Courtiers, stung with rage or fear,
Distill'd lip-poison in a husband's ear.
I ponder'd on the boiling Southern vein ;
Racks, cords, stilettoes, rush'd upon my brain !
By poor, good, weak Antonio, too, disown'd—
I dream'd each night, I should be Desdemona'd :
And, being in Mantua, thought upon the shop
Whence fair Verona's youth his breath did stop :
And what, if Leonardo, in foul scorn,
Some lean Apothecary should suborn
To take my hated life ? A "tortoise" hung
Before my eyes, and in my ears scaled "alligators" rung.
But my Othello, to his vows more zealous—
Twenty Iagos could not make *him* jealous !

New raised to reputation, and to life—
At your commands behold me, without strife, }
Well pleased, and ready to repeat "The Wife." }

THE
BEGGAR OF BETHNAL GREEN:

A COMEDY.—IN THREE ACTS.

ALTERED FROM THE BEGGAR'S DAUGHTER OF BETHNAL GREEN.

DEDICATED
TO KIRKMAN FINLAY, ESQ.

BY HIS MUCH-INDEBTED SERVANT,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

1834.

CHARACTERS.

(AS PERFORMED AT THE VICTORIA THEATRE IN 1834.)

<i>Queen Elizabeth</i>	Mrs. EGBERTON.
<i>Emma</i>	Mrs. OMAN HILL.
<i>Kate</i>	Miss P. HORTON.
<i>Bess</i>	Miss JARMAN.
<i>Mrs. Trusty</i>	Mrs. GARRICK.
<i>Lord Woodville</i>	Mr. DOYNE.
<i>Lord Thomas Willoughby</i>	Mr. DEBAR.
<i>Lord Wilford</i>	Mr. SHERIDAN KNOWLES.
<i>Belmont</i>	Mr. SELBY.
<i>Lord Mayor of London</i>	Mr. T. LEE.
<i>Albert</i>	Mr. WYNNE.
<i>Old Small</i>	Mr. WILLIAMS.
<i>Young Small</i>	Mr. ABBOTT.
<i>Peter</i>	Mr. LATHAM.
<i>Ralph</i>	Mr. FORRESTER.
<i>Strap</i>	Mr. CHIPPENDALE.
<i>Chaplain</i>	Mr. MILDENHALL.
<i>Officer</i>	Mr. WILLOUGHBY.
<i>First Citizen</i>	Mr. YOUNG.
<i>Second Citizen</i>	Mr. KERRIDGE.

THE
BEGGAR OF BETHNAL GREEN.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*St. Paul's.*

Enter BELMONT and WILFORD, disguised as Yeomen.

Bel. Now, Wilford, still thy comrade when at school
Or college; when 'twas peace, thy playfellow,
Thy right-hand man in war; I'm by thee still
In simple guise of honest yeoman's son,
To do the bidding of thy fantasy.

What is't?—Why are we thus attired?—What road
Are we to take? on what adventure bound?
The argument wilt thou unfold to me

Of this romance which thus we now begin?
I see thy cheek is pale—thine eye, without
The gladsome light that speaks a heart at rest;
Still, to my questioning, answerest thou:—

“Come, don a yeoman's coat and roam with me.”—
Thy wish is done—Do mine. Unbosom thee,
For till I find thy heart, I lack my own.

Wilf. Remember'st, Belmont, what thou saidst to me,
When such, or such, if e'er I took a wife,
I said should be the 'haviour of my bride?

Bel. 'Twas this:—“In vain premise or calculate,
How thou shalt fall in love. A fever that!
Which comes upon you, sudden as the plague,
Or intermittent! Love by rule, forsooth!—
Love by philosophy!—Thou shalt be smit
In the twinkling of an eye!—infected by
A touch!—this minute sound as mountain health,
And helpless next, as bed-rid tenant of
An hospital.” And hast thou proved it so?

Wilf. Attend. Last week, I could not go the length
Of Ludgate Hill, but I must horse it thither.
Returning thence, a motley group of men,
Mechanics, servants, masters, old and young,
Collected round some object, which they seem'd
To gaze with most admiring wonder on,
Attracted me—What think you 'twas? A maid—
A maid attired in costless suit, but neat,
Of humble russet!—such a distance wide

Removed from any child of luxury
 Or wealth, that e'en a simple ribbon knot
 Denied its aid to set her bonnet off,
 Or snowy coif and kerchief! But what wealth
 Had nature rain'd where fortune seem'd to grudge
 The poorest drop of her enriching shower!
 Sight could not take it in!—the tongue would stop
 Ere it could sum it half—all terms of praise
 Too scant to value loveliness so rare!
 At thought of winning it, the heart grow wild,
 As his whom overflowing affluence
 Lifts from the depth of want! There stood the maid,
 Silent and motionless, with eyes on ground,
 Abash'd by the reflection of herself,
 Cast back upon her so on every side
 From mirrors that her charms described, indeed,
 By showing her their power!

Bel. Remark'd she thee?

Wilf. She did! My restless courser startled her;
 She raised her eyes; and, lo! they fix'd on mine
 With look, methought, of recognition, that
 I felt as though our very souls embraced,
 And through me ran a thrill unknown before;
 When, spiteful chance! my steed more restive grew,
 Defied command alike of spur or rein,
 And bore me from the maid!

Bel. Ask'd you not who
 She was?

Wilf. No.

Bel. No!

Wilf. As one in jeopardy
 Will lack possession of himself, nor use
 Some means of succour, at his very hand,
 I did not think of that, till out of reach on't!
 My steed, at length, compell'd—by whom I know not—
 To check his mettle, I dismounted straight
 And hasten'd back on foot—but she was gone!—
 If my first look of her hath been my last,
 I'll never care to look on woman more!

Bel. Thy lot is cast! I told thee, Wilford, so!
 To such conclusion ever comes his work;
 Who makes philosophy the rule of love.
 Love knows no rule, and never rule knows less
 Than when obedience we'd exact from it.
 'Tis an uncertain and a froward guest;
 Comes to us when it lists; abides as long
 As pleases it; and its own humour takes,
 Whatever may be ours! You'd go in quest on't—
 And lo! 'tis with you before setting out;
 You'd lay down terms for its sojourning with you—
 And here it is on its own terms at home;
 You'd fain be rid on't, and 'tis fain to stay;

You'd thrust it out of doors, and only find
The threshold's not your own, the moment love
Sets foot within it. Mean'st to seek this maid?

Wilf. Ay, through the world!

Bel. I'll help thee in the search;
And if we find the city holds her not,
As far as Rumford bear me company—
Whither, this week, perforce I must repair—
And thence, where'er thou point'st, will I be thine.

Wilf. Come on! I tell thee, if I find her not,
I'm tenant for the house the sexton builds. [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in Old Small's.*

Enter OLD SMALL.

Old S. Who'd have a son—a plague—to drive him mad?
To hunt for, or to watch, from morn till night,
To coax, to scold, and with no better thrift
To-day, than yesterday! A lackwit, caught
By this and that, and held by nothing. Now
At bowls; next hour at cocking; presently
A race, a show, a feast; and, after that,
Perchance a quarrel. Anything but work.
What, Peter! Peter!

Enter PETER.

Peter. Master, here am I.

Old S. Well, Peter, where's my son?

Peter. I could not find him
In all Whitechapel, seek him where I would.
I call'd in at the Cock, he wasn't there;
The Fox and Geese, but came no better speed;
The Fountain was burn'd down last Tuesday night;
The Rising Sun has stopp'd since Lady-day;
The Crown and Mitre swore at me when last
I sought him there, so thither went I not;
The Duke of Buckingham and he are out
E'er since he broke the drunken tapster's pate;
And never goes he to the Loggerheads,
Except o' Sundays.

Old S. Peter! Peter!

Peter. Master?

Old S. I sore mistrust thee, Peter.

Peter. Master! me?

Old S. Ay, by my troth, I do! mistrust thee, sore
Thou'rt in his secrets! I'll be sworn thou art.
I saw you wink to him, on Sunday last,
At dinner-time. Last Tuesday night, you said,
'Twas only ten when he came in; and not
A minute from the bolting of the door,

The clock struck twelve—I heard it! Wednesday noon
 You took a bundle in, and said 'twas from
 The laundress; when I open'd it, and found
 A spendthrift cloak and jerkin, spick and span
 New from the tailor's board; and, worse than that,
 The whole of Thursday morning wast thou out;
 And when I ask'd thee where, thou couldst not tell!
 Canst tell me now?

Peter. I went an errand, sir,
 To Barbican—an errand of mine own.

Old S. An errand of thine own to Barbican!
 How came I then to see thee at Mile-end?

Peter. At Mile-end, sir?

Old S. At Mile-end, sir! Thou runn'st
 An errand well.

Peter. You saw me at Mile-end?

Old S. When thou wast gone to Barbican! well, sir?

Peter. From Barbican, I went, sir, to Mile-end,
 Not finding what I sought at Barbican.

Old S. I have thee now, my piece of innocence!
 My spice of honesty! my serving-man,
 That runs so well on errands! At Mile-end
 I saw thee not, but saw thee at the foot
 Of London Bridge!

Peter. The foot of London Bridge?

Old S. Ay, sir!

Peter. And where should you have seen me else?
 When what I sought and miss'd, at Barbican;
 And miss'd again in seeking, at Mile-end;
 At London Bridge I found.

Old S. O didst thou so?

Would thou wast o'er the bridge! thou jackanapes!
 Wast thou not too at Hackney that same time?
 At Greenwich down, and Chelsea up, the Thames?
 At Kensington and Islington besides?
 The Tower, St. Paul's, and Westminster to boot?
 Didst thou not foot, from breakfast-time till noon,
 Ground it would take a man a week to ride?
 Thou knave of nimble toe, but nimbler tongue!
 Varlet! thou went'st not to Mile-end, nor yet
 To foot of London Bridge, no more than I,
 That never saw thee there! I know not where
 Thou went'st, but whither thou wilt go I'll tell—
 To Tyburn, sirrah! [*Knock.*] Let thy master in!

[*PETER goes out.*]

His kennel never likes your chain'd dog,
 And there are men like dogs, who loathe the thing,
 Howe'er it profit them, to which you tie them;
 Who, like your dog, would forfeit house and mess
 To break their chain, and forage for a bone.
 What if I take the collar from his neck,
 And leave him, like the prodigal of old,

To his own will, till sad experience proves
That freedom's is the bitterest mastery.
It shall be so. He cannot come to worse,
He may to better. I will do it straight.

Enter YOUNG SMALL *and* PETER.

Young S. Good morning, father!

Old S. Morning, dog! 'tis noon.

Young S. Well then, good noon!

Old S. Nor morning, noon, nor night,

Thou bringest good to me; so wish me none;
Where hast thou been?

Young S. Hard by, at Master All-gain's.

Old S. And what about?

Young S. Playing at loggats, sir.

Old S. At loggats? Spendthrift! Idler! Play at pence,
Shillings, and pounds!

Young S. I do what's next to that,—
Play for them, sir.

Old S. To lose them, cur! to lose them;
Hast thou not lost to-day?

Young S. No, by my troth.

I'm winner, save a halfpenny, by a groat;

And should have doubled that, but for foul play.

But three we wanted, and the bowl was mine—

There stood the loggats, sir, a glorious sight,

And only three to score! and here stood I—

There's not a lad in all Whitechapel, sir,

Is such a hand at loggats!—Here stood I,

With victory in hand, sure as the bowl

With which I thus took aim—A steady aim

Is half the game at loggats, sir—You mind

We wanted only three; the bowl was mine;

There stood the loggats; here stood I—they say

I have an air at loggats!—Thus I stand,

My left leg planted like a buttress, so—

My body poised upon the right, with knee

Bent neither more nor less; I'd like you, sir,

To see me play at loggats—Look, sir—

Old S. Pshaw!

Come, throw the bowl, and make an end.

Young S. An end

I should have made on't, had I thrown the bowl!

Old S. What hinder'd thee?

Young S. A needle-full of thread!

A nail of tape! a button-mould! a piece

Of list! the vapour of a smoothing-board!

Thus, as I said, I held the bowl—'Twas all

But thrown. Ne'er out of cannon-mouth look'd shot

More certain of its aim, than from my hand

The bowl look'd at the loggats. In a twink

Six of the nine at least were lying low!

"Stop!" cries a snivelling tailor; "Master Small,
'Tis not your turn to play"—The pair of shears,
To clip me so, and thus cut up the game!

Old S. Now mark me, Thomas Small; thou'rt twenty-one!
What art thou master of?

Young S. Of quarter-staff,
Rackets, and fives.—I'm capital at fives!—
Hop but the ball, I'm sure to make it fly
Like bullet from a gun.—I play at bowls
And quoits.—At quoits I'm famous for a ringer!—
And then I'll putt the stone with any man.

Old S. Master thou art, I know, of idleness!
But name to me the craft thou'rt master of.
Art fit to be a turner?

Young S. Burn the lathe!

Old S. A cooper?

Young S. Sooner I'd be staved to death!

Old S. A smith?

Young S. As lieve you'd hammer out my brains!

Old S. A tailor?

Young S. Slay me with a needle first!

Old S. What then art fit to be?

Young S. A gentleman!

Old S. A gentleman? Thou scarce canst read!

Young S. What then?

That's nothing in a gentleman!

Old S. Thou writ'st—

But such a hand, the clerk's a cunning one
That makes it out.

Young S. That's like a gentleman!

Old S. Thou canst not cipher. Hand thee in a bill
Of twenty items, and 'twill puzzle thee
To add it up.

Young S. That's quite the gentleman!
Father, thou truly saidst I'm twenty-one,
And he that's twenty-one by law's a man;
So I'm a man, and as a man am free.
I'm master now of handsome twenty pounds,
Left to me by my godfather; to them
Add thou what grace thy graciousness may please,
And, in my own way, let me try the world.

Old S. Thou'rt like a wayward horse that will not break;
The training thee's all labour, profit none,—
And thrift of fruitless toil's to give it up.
Thy will would have thee free before thine age;
Thine age, like a false friend, now backs thy will;
Both are too strong for me, and so I yield.
Wait for me. I'll be with you presently.

[OLD SMALL goes out.]

Young S. Does he consent, and am I free indeed!
New bonds I fear'd to curb me in new rights,
And he takes off the old.—I thrive apace.

Most hopeful setting out! So fair begun
Must needs fair ending have!

Peter. You play'd that game
Of loggats passing well.

Young S. I play'd a game—
But not at loggats, Peter. Never more
I'll play at loggats! Peter, nought I've done
But walk, since morning, up and down Cheapside,
Feasting my eyes on ladies of the court
And its precincts, that come to bargain there.
O Peter, homely are the silks they wear
To their more silken looks! A city coif
Hath twice their pride! No tossing of the head;
No turning of the shoulder, in disdain;
But eyes that drop when they your glances catch,
As if to let you gaze! Peter, I'll make
My fortune!

Peter. Prithce, how?

Young S. Now try and guess!

Peter. I could not guess, were I to try a week!

Young S. Peter, thou canst be shrewd. Look at me, Peter;
Scan me from head to foot. Premising, now,
Thou knew'st me not, wouldst take me for the son
Of Gilbert Small, the pin-maker?

Peter. More like
I'd take you for the son of Walter Husk,
The baker, to the east of Aldersgate.

Young S. A baker's son! A crust hath pith, as much
As thou hast wit! Take me for son of him!

Peter. He's tall, and so art thou.

Young S. What's tall?—What's tall?
Pronounce me son unto a barber's pole,
Because 'tis tall! To say a man is tall
Is nothing, Peter! Look at me again,
And guess what way I'll make my fortune. There,—
I fancy that's a leg.

Peter. It is a leg!

Young S. And thereunto's a foot.

Peter. Yea is there, of
A verity!

Young S. Go to! You flatter, now.
You think me vain; but I am not vain, although
I have a leg and foot,—ay, and a face
Moreover!

Peter. Certainly you have a face.
He'd have a face who'd say thou hadst not one.

Young S. Thou hast a wit, good Peter. Show thee but
A thing, thou see'st it.

Enter OLD SMALL unperceived.

Look at my waist!
Now lift your eye a little farther up,

And ponder how my shoulders spread! Dost see?
 Now on the whole—to speak it modestly—
 Taking me altogether, am I not
 A very personable man? Now, Peter,
 How shall I make my fortune?—Why, you fool!
 By love!

Old S. [*Coming forward.*] Who marries thee, loves not herself:

She goes a voyage in a fair-weather bark,
 That scuds while wind and current favour it,
 But, in itself, hath no sea-worthiness
 To stand their buffeting! Here, have thy wish;
 Thou'lt find no niggard hand has fill'd that purse.
 I give it thee to feed thy wantonness;
 But, e'en for that, I'd have thee chary on't!
 There's not a piece in it that's not made up
 Of grains of fractions, every one of which
 Was slowly gather'd by thy father's thrift,
 And hoarded by his abstinence! It holds—
 How many minutes, torn from needful sleep!
 How many customary wants, denied!
 How many throbs of doubting—sighs of care,
 Laid out for nothing through thy waywardness!
 But take it with a blessing!—Fare thee well!
 Thou never yet couldst suit thee, Thomas, to
 Thy father's house; but, should there come the time,
 Thou know'st the door, that still was open to thee!

[*OLD SMALL goes out.*]

Young S. Peter, I'll stay at home. The good old man!
 He loves me, Peter! Take him back the purse,
 And say I'll stay at home.

Peter. And keep at home?
 Wait like his ledger on the desk?

Young S. I will!—
 That is—I would.

Peter. And follows, if I could.

Young S. I fear it does.

Peter. What's got, return'd, may not be got again.

Young S. Peter, you counsel like an oracle!

Peter. You've rubb'd your eyes till they are red.

Young S. Indeed?

Peter. Look in the glass!

Young S. A pity not to make

My fortune, Peter! Give me back the purse.

I'll make my fortune! Go and get my trunk,

And bring it after me to Cripplegate.

Thou saidst, as I came in, thy place was lost

On my account. I'll find for thee a new one. [*PETER goes out.*]

There's no controlling fate; and fate, I see,

By love, has destined me to make my fortune.

So farewell to my father's house! I could

Be sad at bidding it good-bye—but will not.

I'll think on nought but how we'll meet again,
 When love fulfils what fate decrees for me;
 Bids Thomas Small a golden wedding hail,
 And sends him home a very gentleman!
 [YOUNG SMALL goes out.]

SCENE III.—*An Apartment in Albert's House.*

Enter ALBERT and EMMA.

Emma. Why sigh'st thou, Albert?

Al. This has troubled me.

On 'Thursday, saidst thou?

Emma. Yes.

Al. I recollect!

I recollect!—Was't not on Ludgate Hill?

Emma. On Ludgate Hill.

Al. It was. I recollect!

She grasp'd my arm, as with the start, methought,

Of sudden fear, which I accounted for,

As at the self-same moment heard I near

The furious prancing of a fiery steed!

Rode he a steed?

Emma. He did.

Al. Then 'twas for him!

The image, say'st thou, of my likeness, which,

Before that field, which robb'd me of my sight,

I gave to thee?

Emma. So said our child.

Al. Where is

That likeness?

Emma. In her custody. 'Twas that

Betray'd to me the secret of her heart.

She pray'd it from me. Of its costly case

Despoil'd, I gave it her—and wonder'd soon

To find her, when she thought she was alone,

All lost in gazing on't, with signs that spoke

Affection more than filial, getting vent

In very tears, which, as they fell, her breast

Uneasy heaving, seem'd with sighs to number!

Al. Such things I've heard.

Emma. What, Albert?

Al. I have heard

That subtle passion from a glance hath sprung,

And in a moment e'en struck root so deep;

No art could pluck it out—So! Mark'd she how

He was attired?

Emma. He seem'd a yeoman.

Al. So!

That hope is quench'd:—of prouder state, this thing

That seems a weed, had haply proved a flower!

Emma. I prithee, Albert, how?

Al. That brother, who,
Unnatural, my lands confiscate seized,
'Tis said is father to a goodly son,
The very image of his uncle, dead,
As they believe me. Hope just kindled up,
The youth, she saw, might prove that very son.
He seem'd a yeoman? For this malady
We have, perhaps, a medicine—the knowledge of
What she is, which still we've hidden from her.
That she shall know to-morrow.

Emma. Tell it her,
And quit this wayward life. Thou'st laid by store
Enough. Forsake the land which thee forsakes;
Another one makes thee a franchised man,
Far from the ban of this! There mayst thou take
Thy title, in thy own land forfeited,
And for our fair child find befitting mate.

Al. I will not—cannot quit my native land!
Bann'd as I am, 'tis precious to me still!
It is my father's land—'tis loved for that!
'Tis thine—thy child's—it should be loved for you!
It should be loved, if only for itself!
'Tis free, it hath no despot, but its laws!
'Tis independent; it can stand alone!
'Tis mighty 'gainst its enemies—'tis one!
Where can I find the land the like of it?
Its son, though under ban and forfeiture,
Is envied. He's the brother of the free!
No! no! I cannot quit my native land.
For sight of other land I would not give
The feeling of its breath—the wall of him
That does not forfeit it, which none may scale,
However proud, unscathed, to do him wrong!
I cannot—will not—quit my native land!

Emma. Then let us seek some quiet corner on't;
Nor spend on thriftless hope, what, husbanded
By wise content, would keep us more than rich.

Al. Nor can I that. Who sees his house pull'd down,
And does not strive to build it up again?
Who sees his vessel sunk, and does not look
For other hull to plough the waves anew?
I cannot do't! I've lived on the high seas
Of restless life; I would be on them still!
Say I'm unfit for't—I'd be near them still!
The sailor, maim'd or superannuate,
Seeks not an inland home; but near some cliff
His hammock slings, in hearing of the surge
He wont to cleave of yore! Come, lead me forth.
Where's Bess?

Emma. On errand gone to Aldersgate.

Al. I would again she went not forth alone!

My heart hath strange misgivings, touching her.
 Bold men infest our streets, who would not stop,
 By force to take what right refuses them ;
 Like him who late, with his pernicious suit,
 Wounded her tender ear.

Strap [*without*]. What, ho!

Al. Come in,

Whose challenge sounds unwelcome, yet a friend's.
 Is it not honest Master Strap?

Enter STRAP (intoxicated).

Strap. The same,
 Master of cobbling, as thy shoes allow,
 Which seek his lapstone old, and leave it new—
 But to the matter, as they say.

Al. What is't?

Strap. Why, this it is—a truth as old as time—
 Grief hath this soother, 'tis not solitary,
 But, if 'twill look for't, finds its fellow grief.
 So does the wise man teach. Thou know'st I lost
 My daughter, Sunday week—she did not die.
 Romances drove the giddy vixen mad,
 And she eloped from me. For loss of her,
 I have ne'er been sober since! No comforter
 Like ale—save sack; but sack's for rich men's cares.—
 Your friends!—Says one, "It might have fallen out worse;"
 One, that it might be evil, sent for good;
 One, that the plague itself will have an end;
 And some will pity; some will scold; and some
 Will try to laugh me out of sorrowing.
 As twenty ways there are to mend a shoe
 Besides the soling, heeling, welting on't!

Al. But what is this to us?

Strap. Philosophy!

If not philosophy, a moral, then—
 And if not that, why, then, a hint that thou
 Hast lost thy daughter, just as I lost mine.

Emma. Have lost our daughter!

Strap. With a difference, though—

Al. Nay—

Emma. Prithee, Albert, give him his own way;
 He's sure, at last, to take it; so we lose
 Our time, persuading him to progress ours.—
 Well?

Strap. Well, I said there was a difference,
 But what of that? This road and that road meet—
 Take which you will, you come to the same end.
 It matters not, my daughter, with her will,
 Thine against hers, is gone; since both alike
 Are lost.

Al. How?—Where?—Who forced our child away?

Strap. A gallant, who behemm'd her in the street,

With good a score of lusty followers,
 Flush'd swaggerers, that seem'd of no account
 To reckon lawless deeds! I heard a rout,
 And left my stall. There was she in the midst!
 Some following with outcry 'gainst the deed,
 But none with hand that dared to question it.
 Upon my child I thought, at sight of thine—
 Thought of thy loss mine own brought home to me—
 My brain was swimming, and I rush'd on him
 That held her—but a fillip laid me down!
 Yet, brief as was the scuffle, and the end
 Untoward; profit came of it. This ring
 He wore, though how he left it in my hand
 I know not!

Al. Give it me!—A jewel hath it?
 Yes! 'Tis no common ring. Perhaps a clue
 To trace the ravisher? Give me a sword,
 Get me a knife—a dagger!—anything,
 So that it be a weapon! Wretched man!
 Why don't I ask you first to get me eyes!
 Thought of my heavy wrong, put out the thought
 Of what must help me to revenge my wrong!
 Oh, heavy loss! To have a father's heart—
 To have a father's arm to second it,—
 And both be useless for the lack of sight!
 The queen! The queen!

Strap. Wouldst see the queen? Then straight
 Repair to Temple Bar; to-day begins
 Her Royal Progress; there she's sure to wait,
 The mayor and citizens give her greeting there.

Al. Lead on! My child!—My child!—Whate'er betide,
 This hour will I unfold myself, and find,
 One way or other, period to my cares.
 Knows't thou where dwells a notary on the way?
 Conduct me to him!—On!—We'll meet our death
 Or find our child.—On!—On!—Our child!—Our child!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE IV.—*Temple Bar.*

The Houses on each side adorned with cloths of silk or velvet, gold or silver, hanging from the upper windows.—A crowd of Citizens, men and women, assembled.

Officer. Stand back, sirs! Stand back there, I say!—Why press ye forward?—Back there! back! Keep order till her highness pass.

First Citizen. Will it be long, sir, ere she come?

Officer. To answer that, I must know the measure of your patience. Stretches it to some five minutes hence, I dare warrant you she will be here quickly; for 'tis a good half-

hour beyond the time she appointed to set out from Westminster.

Second Citizen. Is't to Norwich, sir, her highness makes her progress this time? [*Shouts without.*]

Officer. To Norwich 'tis, sir.—Peace! her highness comes. Each keep his place, nor press upon the other; so one and all will see the sight. Here comes the lord mayor, with the aldermen and council, to greet her highness. More room!—Stand back!—Stand back!

Enter the LORD MAYOR, &c. Enter Procession through the Gates; Soldiers, Gentlemen Pensioners, Band of Gentlemen, Band of Knights, Band of Barons, Trumpeters and Herald. The QUEEN, accompanied by ladies, closed up with Guards.—The LORD MAYOR, &c., advance and kneel to the QUEEN.

Mayor. May't please your majesty, with duteous knees,—
That for our loving and right loyal hearts
Most truly vouch, as would our tongues for both—
Our happy privileges, of the which
Your gracious sceptre the high guardian is,
Thus lowly at your highness' feet we lay;
And with fair greeting, pray to welcome you
To your good city, here, of London.

Queen. Freely
Do we accept your greeting, citizens
Of London; of our loyal cities, chief;
The princess fair of commerce, that defies
The world to show her peer; whose merchantmer
Throng the broad seas with gallant fleets, the which
To float, the treasuries of kings might brag!
The privileges, which at our feet you lay;
We pray you to resume; and truly guard
For her behoof, who, in her subjects' weal,
Is proud to boast she still locks up her own.

Mayor. Our duties ever on your highness wait!

Queen. Proceed.

Albert [*without*]. The queen!—The queen!—Where!—
Where's the queen?

Officer. Stand back!

Queen. Make way!—Who calls upon the queen?

Officer. So please your majesty, a beggar-man!
Stand back!

Albert. The queen!—The queen!

Officer. Stand back, I say!

Queen. Hold, sirrah! Dare not stop my subjects' way
That come in suffering to me! Did I—when
My birth-right crown'd me, and I pass'd along,
My way beset with subjects, that more thick
Begirt me with their blessings, than their eyes—
My chariot frequent stay, that I might take
Their gifts of nosegays from poor women's hands,

And shall I now pass on, nor stop to hear
A poor man's prayer! Approach, whate'er thou art!

[*The Officer makes way for ALBERT, who enters.*

Albert. [*Presenting a scroll.*] Lead—Lead me to her high-
ness' feet! [*Kneels.*

Justice, great queen!—Justice and mercy!

Queen. How!

Mercy appeals against justice; justice stops

The mouth of mercy!—Ask'st thou, then,

For both?

Albert. For mercy I'd implore, great queen, for one,
Whose high offence hath long contrition half
Atoned for,—half, the loss of sight—his just
And heavy penalty for swerving duty!

Justice I'd ask on one, whose daring wrong,

In open day, has robb'd me of my child—

A virgin, gracious queen, of beauty rare,

Although her father's eyes ne'er vouch'd for it!

Queen. But went she of her will?

Albert. No!—No!—by force

Just now!—i' th' public street!—in open day!

Torn from her parents, whither know they not—

A mother that in him, who should protect

Her child and her, finds but a heavy charge!

A father, with the limbs, and heart of one,

Still without eyes, is lopp'd of heart and limbs—

Unfit to succour those that cleave to him!

O royal maiden, take a maiden's part,

And, for her wrong, o'erlook the wrong, might stand

Betwixt thy justice and her injury!

Queen. Thy tears, old man, serve more than flashing eyes

To kindle up our wrath! Know'st thou the name

Of the offender?

Albert. No.

Queen. Nor rank?

Albert. Nor rank—

Unless a ring—which, in a scuffle, that

Befel with one, who tried to take her part,

Came from the finger of the ravisher—

Serve as a clue to find him.

Queen. Show it us!

This ring is not a stranger to us! Ha!

Waits in our train Lord Thomas Willoughby?

Wood. No, gracious mistress.

Queen. Read this document; [*Gives ALBERT'S scroll.*

Advise him straight of its contents; and add

Our will, that on receipt, with prompt despatch,

He lead the beggar's daughter to our feet—

His wedded bride! What to thyself relates,

We'll read at leisure; what to thy child, at once

We'll give our care to. Instruct us by what name

Thou, now, art known, or title?

Albert. The Blind Beggar
Of Bethnal Green.

Queen. Thy daughter's name?

Albert. 'Tis Bess.

Queen. Our own!—Of beauty rare, thou say'st?

Albert. Most rare!

Queen. And good?

Albert. Most good!

Queen. [*To Attendant.*] Look to this sightless man!
Our pleasure 'tis he waits upon us. On!

The glory it shall be of Bess's reign,
Her lowest subject, if his cause is right,
Hath, 'gainst her highest, odds; for beggar e'en,
He, still, shall have his queen to side with him! [*They go out.*]

Enter YOUNG SMALL and PETER newly attired.

Young S. There!—Said I not we should be late and lose
The setting out, wherein we might have mix'd
Unnoticed with the royal cavalcade;
And all through fault of thee, that took'st such time
To apparel thee—no doubt with wonderment
At such surpassing gear!—Let's breathe awhile.—
Peter, you'll ruin me! Is that a way
A serving-man should bear himself?—Consider—
Thy master, Peter, is a gentleman.

Peter. To keep in mind on't strive I all I can!

Young S. I say thou dost not, else would it appear.

Peter. It shall appear.

Young S. See that it do so, then—

Especially when thou walk'st out with me.
Then carry thus thy head, stand with an air!
Walk with a gait, as thou wast somebody;
And when thou speak'st, thou must speak up, like one
That values not who hears;—but not to me!
To me, good Peter, do thou none of these!
Speak small to me; wear thus thy head to me;
Stand thou not with an air when I am by;
Nor, when my eye's upon thee, move with gait
Of somebody! Thou'rt ever nobody
In presence of thy master!—minding still
To bear thee like a gentle serving-man.

Peter. I'll mind.

Young S. And do so!—And remember too
When I am seated, and thou wait'st on me,
Thou layest not thy hand upon my chair.
But stand at distance from't—nor yet in line,
But good a foot behind the rearmost leg;
Not in advance of that a barley-corn!
And balance not thy body on one leg,
With knee of t'other negligently bent,
As if it said "I care not!" 'Tis not meet.
But stand on both, as every joint of thee

Acknowledged me thy master—not astride,
 But heel to heel!—And keep thy finger from
 Thy button-hole!—but not to cram it in
 Thy poke! Nor yet on hip to rest it!—’Twere
 As thou wouldst say, “I think myself a lord!”
 Thou wouldst not fold thine arms! Field-marshal, Peter,
 Could do no more—do nothing with thine arms,
 But let them hang! There! Seem’st thou now indeed
 A serving-man.

Peter. Will that content you?

Young S. Yes.

But mark! Thou hast play’d with me at quoits and loggats,
 No more of that!

Peter. I’ll mind.

Young S. And when I have order’d me a tankard out,
 And given it thee to hold, thou more than once
 Hast quaff’d it off to my good luck.—Be sure
 No more of that!

Peter. I’ll try and mind. But, sir—
 Since so I must accost thee—what avail
 The gait and air of gentle serving-man,
 Without the pocket, should belong to one?
 Look there!

Young S. What’s that?

Peter. A melancholy rap!
 A black-faced copper sixpence! Add to which
 A button without shank, and you sun up
 The pocket of your gentle serving-man!
 I ne’er can do without allowances!

Young S. Allowances!—What wages got you from
 My father, Peter?

Peter. ’Twere a cunning clerk
 Could count them,—Purse was never made, would wear
 With hoarding them. To coin them took it not
 Gold, silver, no nor copper! I served him for
 My bed and board, that board and bed were none,
 But shifts for them; a jerkin in the year
 And doublet—old apparel new made up;
 Hose, when the feet had walk’d away from them;
 Shoes, whose last mending had the cobbler brought
 To his last wits; and hat that gaped to see
 Its crown was gone; with what good luck besides
 Might send me.

Young S. And thou want’st allowances!
 Do I not promise thee a pound a year?
 Jerkin and doublet, to provide thee with,
 The thirtieth penny on the counter rang
 The knell of half a crown! Hose got I thee,
 With feet unto them, newly vamp’d and darn’d!
 And from the cordiner, himself, direct,
 Wast thou not shod? Nor was thy head forgot.
 With thy well-furnish’d trunk to make it match,

Did I not treat it to a crown-whole hat,
 Nor yet at outlay stopp'd, so ruinous,
 But in the hat a comely feather stuck,
 At charge of twice a groat? No more of this!
 Believe when thou'rt well off.—There's twopence for thee,
 To show thee that thou serv'st a gentleman!
 Dream'st thou sometimes?

Peter. I do.

Young S. What's the best dream
 A man can dream?

Peter. They say 'tis hanging.

Young S. So!
 Didst thou not dream of hanging yesternight?

Peter. I did.

Young S. Thy dream's come out! Thy fortune's made,
 But knew'st thou it—Come on! Content thee, and
 Thou shalt have pence! Mind how thou bear'st thyself!
 Well done! But keep to that! So.—Follow me. [*They go out.*]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—Room in an Inn at Romford.

Enter Hostess and RALPH.

Hostess. Now have I told thee all—how she came here
 On Tuesday night, sore faint and travel-worn,
 When thou at Epping wast upon the roam;
 How from her home, by bold and lawless men,
 She had been forced; how she escaped their hands;
 How, when she reach'd her parents' roof again,
 Deserted 'twas,—its tenants doubtless gone
 In quest of her; how, knowing not what way
 To go, she put her trust in Heaven to guide her,
 Which brought her to our door!

Ralph. Inform'd she thee
 Who were her parents?

Hostess. No. I ask'd, but saw
 The question troubled her, so ask'd no more.
 I see thou think'st her fair. Now, mark me, Ralph.
 Thou'rt less sedate, I know, than thou art wild,—
 And, still, I think there's in thy heart a check
 Of ruth and honesty, that draws thee back
 When passion 'cross their bounds would have thee wing.
 Beware then, Ralph, her beauty tempt thee not
 To do her wrong! She's poor! She has not friend,

Of right, she here can call so—has not home,
 Save what a stranger's roof supplies her with;
 The labour of her hands is all her means;
 Her virtue is their strength; who'd rob them on't,
 Were he my son, he were not villain only,
 But coward mean to boot!

Ralph. Nay, mother, nay,
 I'm not that lackgrace yet! Give thou consent,
 I'm wived to-morrow, for sweet Bessy's sake.

Hostess. I'll think on't, Ralph. Meantime bestir thee, son;
 Look to the gentleman, since Wednesday last
 Took up his quarters here.

Ralph. The gentleman?

My shoe's a gentleman!

Hostess. How, sirrah! this
 Thy manners?

Ralph. Mother, I overheard—

Hostess. Didst what?

I'll have no list'ners in my house,
 No eaves-droppers! no ears that wait on keyholes!
 Who take their quarters up at the Queen's Arms,
 Shall have their secrets, as their luggage, safe!
 Fie on thee, Ralph! No more on't! Mind thyself!
 Thy mother's hard-earn'd gains not more were won
 By thrift than honesty; whom they enrich
 Must honest be as thrifty. So be thou!
 My son is he, not of my blood that's drop,
 But portion of my heart.—Not so—I'd take
 A hind that is, to be thy mother's heir. [RALPH goes out.
 All's right and tidy,—each thing in its place,
 And cleverly put out of hand. No cup,
 Tankard, or flagon, but its face might show
 To polish'd silver, rich and bright as 'tis.
 There's sure a virtue in her touch, that leaves
 All things it meets as ne'er they look'd before!
 Luck hath she brought with her. Since here she came,
 No house in Romford holds its head so high
 As the Queen's Arms, for balm of sparkling ale,
 Cordial of sack, and nectar of bright wine!
 Would she were wife to Ralph! We cannot hope
 To keep the treasure, long, that's coveted
 By all who see it, and by right's not ours.
 But, yet, who is she?—Ralph's my son; and heir
 To good a hundred pounds a year, besides
 His father's house and land. Her courtesy might
 An heiress' self vouchsafe to make to Ralph;
 When he should wed, I ever look'd, at least,
 To give my blessing to some doctor's, squire's,
 Or curate's daughter. Wed him shall I to
 One knows not whom?—I'll question her more closely.
 His father, when he wived, took home his match,
 And so must he! She comes. [BESS sings without.

No need to keep
 Blackbird or thrush, while she is in the house;
 So sweet and active is her pretty throat.
 What's that she looks thus constant at, whene'er
 She thinks herself alone! but when observed,
 Confused and startled, nestles in her breast?

*Enter BESS with her father's picture, which she frequently
 examines while she sings.*

The blind man's at the door,
 And won't you let him in?
 He plays the harp, he'll spare no pains,
 Your favour for to win.
 He'll sing you fits, one, two, or three,
 And he'll ask you a groat—no more;
 And, grudge you the groat, he'll be thankful for less—
 The blind man's at the door!
 He'll sing you stories, sad,
 He'll sing you stories, gay;
 And call as often as you please,
 He will not say you nay.
 If you fill him a cup, he's a happy blind man,
 As oft he has been before;
 But, grudge you the cup, he's contented with none—
 The blind man's at the door!
 The blind man's at the door,
 And shelter none has he;
 The sky doth smile, or it doth frown,
 But which he cannot see!
 If you welcome him in, what cares he for the sky?
 It may shine, or it may pour!
 But, grudge you that grace, wet or dry he must on!—
 The blind man's at the door!

*[At the conclusion of the song, the Hostess approaches
 and steals a look at the picture.]*

Hostess. Whose picture is that, my Bess?

Bess. My father's.

Hostess. Then

Was never father better loved than thine!
 Nay, blush not, that thou lovest thy father well!
 Show't me. He is a father to be loved!
 No wonder thou shouldst keep it next thy heart;
 I well could take't to mine! Thou blushest more
 And more. Thou silly wench! There, put it up.
 I like to hear thee sing, my pretty Bess;
 'Tis gladness to my heart! Art happy, Bess,
 To live with me?

Bess. As far as happiness

Can live with Bess,—her parents lost—herself
 Unable to provide her home or friend!

Hostess. Not so, my pretty Bess! Herself can best

Provide her these. No customer that comes
To the Queen's Arms, and hath unmistress'd house,
But would be glad if Bess its mistress were--
Knew he her history.

Bess. [*Aside.*] Her history?

Hostess. One likes to know

Whence people come—who people are—their birth
And parentage. Wast thou a lady born,
I could not love thee better than I do;
But loving thee so well, I'd know who 'tis,
So well I love. Who art thou, pretty Bess?

Bess. [*Aside.*] If I should say I am a beggar's child,
The door, that took me in, may thrust me out!
If aught beside, I speak what is not truth,
And that I'll never speak!—You think me good:
You find me willing—useful in the house—
Not knowing who I am. To teach you that,
More good, more willing, useful, makes me not;
Then do not seek to know't! I dare be bound,
If cause I give you not for more content,
I'll give you none for less!

Hostess. Where mystery is,
Doubt is. We hide what we're afraid to show.

If I be come of honest kind, care I

Who knows my father's name? I'd cry it from
The steeple-top! To be a friend, we needs
Must find a friend. My friend is she, alone,
That trusts me. If my love's not worth as much,
Better I keep it to myself! Fair brow
Thou hast, and open too! I ween thy heart's
As fair—but why is't not as open, Bess?—
Why, whither goest thou?

Bess. [*Who while the Hostess has been speaking, has put on
her cloak and bonnet.*] I know not—but
I know I must go hence! You're right!—'Tis fit
One know who 'tis they lodge—who 'tis they love.
'Tis little to ask that! Alas for them
That are not masters of so small a boon!
They may be question'd—wonder were they not!
They may be doubted—they cannot complain!
They may lack friend—they've but themselves to blame!
Farewell—Thanks!—Thanks! all thanks!—'Twas all a gift!
The wind and rain, on which you shut the door
That let me in, had just as much a right
To enter it as I. I'm rested now,
Refresh'd and strengthen'd—Every foot I go
I'll bless you that I am so!

Hostess. Leave me, Bess!

That shalt thou never! Give me off thy cloak!

Prevent me not!—thy bonnet I'll untie,

Or never more may I tie on my own!

Ah! Bess, dost mind me? Care I who thou art?

Or doubt I thee? or am I not thy friend?

Nay, if thou leav'st the house, I leave it too !
 I'll have no house that does not roof thy head !
 For ever live with me ! [*Embraces her.*] Want'st thou a right ?
 A right thou soon shalt have. Ralph loves thee, Bess,—
 Whoe'er thou art, thou shalt be wife to Ralph !
 Nay, answer not ! I say I'll have it so !
 See if I love thee now ! Here's company—
 I'll look to them. Go dry thine eyes, sweet Bess !
 Thou shalt be daughter, wife, and all, my Bess !
[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE II.—*A Private Room in the Queen's Arms.*

Enter RALPH.

Ralph. Look to thy birthright, Ralph !—Avails it not
 To be thy mother's son that nature made,
 Thou must be offspring of her humour too !
 Is't fault of thine that thou art not a wall ?
 But listenest, when men, in earshot, tell
 Their loose-kept secrets ! Gentleman, forsooth !
 My gentleman's gentleman !—the scrub of him !
 The helper o' the scrub—a counterfeit,
 Not worth the brad should nail it to the counter,—
 To some vile counter,—has been taken thence ;
 And the base metal coin'd anew, to pass,
 To pass for honest coin ! 'Twon't pass with me !
 He trusts to make his fortune by the priest—
 Of some rich dame the favour sweet to win—
 And thereunto he follows the queen's court ;
 But stopping, on his way, at Romford, here
 Sets eye upon the linnet I would lime,
 And tarries at our house. But, lest he spoil
 My sport, I've pointed out the bush to him
 Where sits a goldfinch—but a painted one—
 Our Kate, that vows to wed a gentleman !—
 Our chambermaid ! to seek her fortune, come
 Like him to Romford, and alighted here.
 He takes her for a maid of noble stock ;
 In her own right, a costly heiress, flying
 Compell'd espousals, and, in the disguise
 Of lowly chambermaid, close crouching, here
 To shun pursuit.—Ha ! Here she comes !—Good day.

Enter KATE.

Sweet Kate.

Kate. Hold off ! I'm Kate too sweet for thee !

Ralph. Indeed ! When shall we call thee wife, sweet Kate ?

Kate. When thou hold'st stirrup to my husband !

Ralph. How !

Will nothing less content thee ? Marry, Kate,
 Marry thy match, or count to die a maid !

Kate. My match is he that fits *my* thought, not thine.

Ralph. Thy match is he that fits thy fortune, Kate.

Kate. Not so, when I my fortune am above.

Ralph. Their fortune, who're above, oft fall below.

Kate. Leave me to look to that.

Ralph. Look to it, then,

'Thy new year's gift I'll double for thee, Kate,

If, ere the year comes round, thou curtsey not

The wife of honest hind!

Kate. The hind I'll wed

Thou'lt touch thy bonnet to!

Ralph. Ay, shall I, Kate,

When he to me doffs his.

Kate. Doffs his to thee?

He first shall doff his head!

Ralph. Nay, Kate, be friends!

Not only do I wish thee well to wed,

But, if I could, would help thee, pretty Kate;

And I *can* help thee, if thou'rt in the mood.

Kate. What! in the mood to help thee to a jest?

Ralph. Thyself be judge! The gentleman that came

On Wednesday, throws soft glances at thee, Kate—

Is that a jest? I've heard, thy cousin, Kate,

Was cousin's cousin to the cousin of

An earl, sweet Kate—I've told him so! Is that

A jest? Thou know'st how windfalls come—How men

To-day but ragged knaves, next day are seen

To strut as rob'd lords—how oft the tree

Of noble family has wither'd, branch

By branch, till none to bear its honours left,

They're gone to cover some poor distant graft,

The parent stock ne'er threw its shadow on!

Why may't not hap to thee?—I think it may—

I *wish* it may—and, as 'tis easy, Kate,

To fancy what we wish, I've told him, thou

An heiress art, and hast a title, too!

Is that a jest? Let but thy bearing back

My giving out, I'd marvel not if ere

A quarter of a year—a month—a week,

I doff my bonnet to thy spouse, indeed!

Is that a jest?

Kate. Ralph, thou'rt an honest lad!

Ralph. When thou repair'st to church, may I, sweet Kate,
Make bold to kiss thee when the knotting's done?

Kate. I shall not mind, for old acquaintance, Ralph.

Ralph. And when thou'rt married, may I sometimes call?

Kate. Ay, mayst thou, Ralph.

Ralph. How often?—Once a year?

Kate. I'll not be angry, Ralph, though it be twice.

Ralph. How kind thou art!—and when I call, sweet Kate,
Wilt bid the lackey ask me in?

Kate. I will.

Ralph. And order Master Ralph a cup of sack,
To drink thy health, while in the hall he stands?

Kate. As sure as I shall be a lady, Ralph.

Ralph. Thou shalt be married to a gentleman!
And here he comes—Observe him, bonny Kate,
The visage, figure, habit, air, and walk
Of gentleman! To note his only gait,
A man would say, or he lack'd brains, there goes
At least a handsome thousand pounds a year!
When thou shalt call him spouse! Away, my Kate.
Don thou a whiter 'kerchief—change this cap
For thy Sunday one, with bows as broad and red
As full-blown peonies! and, soon as done,
Come back again, when thou shalt find him here—
And troll that pretty song you sang to us
On Tuesday night—as though you mark'd him not.
Love in his heart be sure hath taken root—
See how 'twill grow apace and come to fruit!
Bear thee as lofty gentlewoman, Kate;
Go proudly, Kate, and not as chambermaid!
Of maids thou shalt be mistress!—Well done, Kate!

[*Kate goes out.*]

Here comes, indeed, my gentleman, from top
To toe new-furnish'd, as on conquest bent. [*Retires up stage.*]

Enter YOUNG SMALL.

Young S. Debate it thus. What's love? It is not land
Or gold. 'Tis not attire or tenement;
Or meat or drink! What is the worth on't then?
Nothing! It makes not wise—for these are things
That wise men covet, and 'twould counsel me
To part with them. It makes not great—great men
Hath love undone. 'Tis not content—I ne'er
Saw lover yet but he was woe-begone!
Its signs are willows, darts, and bleeding hearts!
I'll none on't, I'm resolved! Sweet mistress Bess!

Ralph. Sweet mistress Kate thou mean'st.

Young S. Right, Master Ralph.

Yet mistress Bess is sweet! But what of that?
'Tis fit a gentleman a lady wed—
So Kate's the maid for me! I'll conquer love!
Love's no small thing to conquer. Men fall sick
For love—go mad for love!—hang, drown themselves!—
But love has met its match when it meets me!
You see I'm ready, Ralph.

Ralph. I see you are.

Ay, that's the way to go a-wooing!

Young S. What,
It strikes you?

Ralph. Yes!

Young S. The jerkin's a new cut,
Or else the tailor's perjured—Oath he took
It should be made as never jerkin was!

Ralph. His oath he has kept!

Young S. You mark my doublet too?

Ralph. Else lack'd I eyes.

Young S. And how the sleeves are slash'd?

Ralph. 'Tis slashing work indeed! She must have heart
Of stone, gives she not in.

Young S. A fine effect!

And then my hat!—What think you of the set?

Ralph. A gallant set—a very gallant set,
Most valiantly turn'd up!

Young S. The feather red!

Blood-red! and nearly of a rapier's length!
'The loop of warlike steel! So, what with loop,
Feather, and set, methinks it is a hat
Cries—"Touch me not."

Ralph. Methinks it is.

Young S. 'Twas made
To special order!

Ralph. So 'twould seem.

Young S. You know
They like a gallant bearing. I would look
A very Hector, when I go to woo!

Ralph. And thou hast hit it.

Young S. On your honour, now?

Ralph. Else never man hit anything.

Young S. Indeed!

I thank you, master Ralph. I'm glad you're pleased.

You have a taste! Beshrew me but you have!

How would you have me wear my rapier? So?

Or so?

Ralph. Why, so—It better shows the hilt.

Young S. A pretty hilt? I bought it for the hilt.
The cutler would have palm'd upon me one
Of better blade! He thought he had a fool
To deal with! Buy a rapier for the blade!
Who shows the blade?

Ralph. Most true.

Young S. I think I'll do.

Ralph. No doubt on't—Here she comes, sir.—That's her
voice.

Didst ever hear her sing, sir?

[*KATE sings without.*

Young S. Never.

Ralph. No!

Then never did you hear a nightingale.

Apart till awhile, sir, you'll hear her voice.

Enter KATE, and sings.

What shall I give to win your heart,

My pretty chambermaid?

What shall I give to win your heart?

I've land! I've gold! With aught I'll part

To make you mine, he said.

The maid, kind sir, whose heart is sold,

A well-a-day may sing!

The maid, kind sir, whose heart is sold,

Gives more than worth of land or gold—

Unless a golden ring!

Say aught but that, my bonny queen,

And thou'rt my own, he said.

Say aught but that, my bonny queen—

Who gives not that, she said, is e'en

Beneath a chambermaid!

Take that, take that, and all beside,

Be mine, be mine, he said!

Take that, take that, and all beside;

She's worth me, that must be my bride,

Though but a chambermaid!

Ralph. Up to her, sir—yet hold! I'll whisper her

A word, commending thee. Your gentle blood

Is skittish, sir, and mettlesome—Behoves

You tenderly approach, yet watchfully;

'Tis quick of instinct too, to know its kind.

Was ever balance poised by thee or thine,

Yard flourish'd, counter brush'd, or ledger scrawl'd,

'Tis odds she'll apprehend it in a trice.

Thank fate, thou art indeed a gentleman!

Young S. [Aside.] I'd thank it, never had I pass'd for one.

A score of crowns for my own clothes again!

What if she find, despite the tailor's craft,

The hatter's, jeweller's, and milliner's,

My suit is not a fit!—undress me!—bid me

Put on the counter clothes again, and wait

Upon my father's customers! The thought

Has set my heart a-thumping! Thomas Small!

Better thou hadst remain'd thy father's dog,

Than ta'en a roam to Romford.

Ralph. Kate, behoves

Thou bear thyself as lofty gentlewoman.

If he looks ten feet high, do thou look twenty;

When he accosts thee, eye him up and down,

And down and up again from head to foot;

He verily believes thou art a lady,

Keep him to that—Thy arms a-kimbo put—

Walk to and fro, and toss thy pretty head!

Behoves fine ladies give themselves fine airs,

Or who would know them fine—

Up to her now.

[*To YOUNG SMALL.*

Young S. Fair Kate, a word I fain would speak to thee.

Kate. [Following RALPH'S direction.] Sir! [YOUNG SMALL

starts back, KATE walks about as instructed.

Ralph. Now, stick up to her, or, as I live,

Thou'll lose her, sir. Set thou to work as well,

Pace to and fro, a yard at every step—

Great men, I have remark'd, take mighty strides—
That's right!—She stops—Now to the charge again!
Tell her thou hast a guess of her estate;
'Twill soften her—but mind thou nothing bate
The feeling of thine own, as right thou shouldst not!
Thou art, from top to toe, a gentleman!

Young S. A cunning man who feels himself to be
The man he knows he is not! I perceive
'Tis not the clothes that make the gentleman.
Odzooks! she traversed me from top to toe,
As she would lay me open with her eye.
I vow I feel as I were like to swoon—
O Little Cheap!—Snug Little Cheap! As much
As once I wish'd me out of thee, I now
Wish I were back again!

Ralph. Now, pretty Kate,
Let's calm a little—thou hast quite convinced him.
Thou art, indeed, a gentlewoman born;
Put off a cloud or two, and now and then,
When next he speaks, give out a blink of sun,
But not that he forget 'twas tempest, Kate.
Take out thy 'kerchief—hast thou onc. Now draw it
From corner unto corner—be it clean.
Now pass it 'cross thy face, and back again;
Now use it so, as ladies do a fan;
Betray a little agitation, Kate;
Swing on one foot thy body to and fro,
And with thy other beat upon the ground.
Now, sir, at once propose for her—speak up!
Have not a faint heart!

Young S. No!

Ralph. Remember you're
A gentleman.

Young S. I do!

Ralph. And so you are
From top to toe!

Young S. I thank you, Ralph—You're good.

Ralph. And so your father was before you, sir,
And quite as much his father before him;
Was he not, sir?

Young S. Ay, quite as much, good Ralph,
Or, if he was not, I'm no gentleman.

Ralph. Then, now at once propose for her. Hem! twice
Or thrice before you speak, and broadly hint
At her gentility.

Young S. Engaging Kate—
As gentleman should gentlewoman wed,
So fain would I to wife take thee, sweet Kate!

[Turns to RALPH.

And now I must take breath! I tell thee, Ralph,
To woo a lady is no easy thing.

[Retires.

Ralph. Kate, canst thou blush? If not, why hang thy head,

And look as though thou knew'st not where to look,
 And clasp thy hands and twirl thy thumbs about,
 And make a shift to squeeze out half a sigh,
 But loud enough to hear. Well done! well done!
 Bespeaks her every way a gentlewoman—
 Does she not, sir? [To YOUNG SMALL.]

Young S. Upon my life it does.

Ralph. Now bring her to the point of yes or no.

Young S. Of yes or no?

Ralph. Yes!

Young S. Yes or no! I vow

I tremble at the thought on't—Just I feel
 As though I play'd at loggats, and a pound
 Were laid upon the game, and mine the throw.

Ralph. Well, sir?

Young S. Good Ralph—I'll take a little time.

Ralph. So do. He comes to pop the question, Kate.

When first he speaks, no answer render him:

Nor yet the second time—nor yet the third.

Kate. No, Ralph?

Ralph. Be patient, Kate! It were not meet,
 In such a strait, a lady speak at once!

The thought should seem to take away thy breath;

Thou shouldst appear as thou wast like to faint,

And do, sweet Kate!—I'll be beside thee—Fall

Upon my shoulder—and when I say “now,”

Come to thyself—but mind, not all at once,

But bit by bit—I'll have him at thy feet.

Look at him once, and turn away again—

Another time—and try to turn away,

But, finding that thou canst not do't, cry “yes!”

And, quite o'ercome, fall plump into his arms!

You'll mind?

Kate. Be sure of me.

Ralph. Make sure of him!

Up to her now, sir!—Now or never, sir!

Young S. Dear Kate! wilt be my bride?

Ralph. Again, sweet sir!

Young S. Dear Kate! wilt be my bride, a second time?

Sweet Kate, the third time. Wilt thou be my bride?

[KATE falls on RALPH's shoulder.]

Ralph. I do believe she faints.

Young S. She does indeed!

She's a true lady—On my life she is.

Ralph. Down on your knees, sir—both your knees—and chafe
 Her hands with yours—kissing them now and then—

And 'gainst she comes unto herself, 'twere well

If you could squeeze a tear into your eye:—

Fair Kate, awake! Your lover's at your feet,

Kneeling as well behoves a gentleman—Now—

Kate. [Recovers—follows RALPH's directions.] Yes! [Throw-
 ing herself into SMALL's arms, nearly oversetting him.]

Ralph. Hold up, sweet sir, and try to bear
 This overpowering happiness!—To both
 I wish a world of joy.—Take her apart [To SMALL.
 Into the garden. Never drop thy suit
 Until she name the day, and be't to-morrow.
 "The cup, sir, and the lip!" But, gentle Kate, [To KATE.
 'Tis not enough the bird is limed, behoves
 You have him in your hand—Good sir!—fair lady!
 I give you joy, and wish you a good day! [Goes out.
Young S. Come, gentle Kate, that is to be my bride.
Kate. O, la, sir!
Young S. Sir! call me thy Thomas, Kate.
 My name is Thomas—master Thomas.
Kate. La!
 I ne'er can call thee Thomas.
Young S. Yes, thou canst,
 And wilt!—dear Thomas!—thy own Thomas!
Kate. La!
Young S. As I will call thee my own Kate, be sure,
 As soon as we are man and wife.
Kate. O, la!
 Don't talk of it.
Young S. Of what else should I talk?
 Come Kate—my wife!—my lady Kate!
Kate. O, la! [They go out.

SCENE III.—*The Bar and Parlour.*

Enter the Hostess, conducting LAST, MORTICE, and MALLET.

Hostess. Walk in, good master Mallet. Gentlemen,
 Walk in, you're welcome. What will't please you have?
 We've choice for all, and nought but's of the best.

Mallet. We'll taste your ale, good mistress Trusty. Hark!
 How does your pretty barmaid? Did you speak,
 As late you promised, a good word for me?

Hostess. I did.

Mallet. And was she pleased?

Hostess. 'Tis hard to say

When maids are pleased. When I myself was one,
 What most I seem'd was, oft, what least I felt.

Mortice. Your ear, kind hostess.—Gave you mistress Bess
 The message that I sent her?

Hostess. Word for word.

Mortice. What word did she return me?

Hostess. Marry, none!

Bess is a prudent wench. Maids' thoughts go cheap
 That can be had for asking! Little worth,
 Yet hoarded charily, great price they bring.
 I found it so myself when I was young.

Last. A word, good mistress Trusty, when you're done.

Hostess. I'm at your service, now, sir.

Last. Handed you
My gift to Bess?

Hostess. I did.

Last. And took she it?

Hostess. She took it not.—'Tis here for you again.
Presents to maids are earnest. Take they them,
They next should take the donors. Had not I
Thought so in my free days, I should have won
A dower in gifts! You shall be served anon.

Mortice. I guess you've come bad speed.

Last. Hast thou come better?

Mallet. The fault's our own. Love's not a game at law,
Wherein the player is not he that stakes.
I'll play my game myself, and ask sweet Bess
To church to-morrow!

Last. So will I.

Mortice. And I.

[*They go out.*]

[*Bess crosses the stage after them with a tankard.*]

Enter Hostess conducting BELMONT and WILFORD.

Hostess. Walk in, walk in—I'll show you to a room.

Wilf. And please you get my chamber ready straight;
I will, at once, to bed.

Hostess. I'll see to't, sir.

He early goes to rest—He must be ill?
Love-sick perhaps? There's comfort for him then,
Like all his sex he'll soon get over that!

Bel. Hostess!

Hostess. Your will?

Bel. I'd try your wine—Is't good?

Hostess. The very best! Please you sit down, good sirs.

[*Places chairs and goes out.*]

Bel. Still rapt as ever! Rouse thee, Wilford, rouse thee!
Shake off this lethargy, and be a man!
Take faster hold of hope! We'll find her yet.
But should we fail, what then? Art thou to pine
To death? This malady is of the head
More than the heart. Believe it can be cured,
Thou'lt find 'twill be so. Be thyself again!
Be free! But once beheld may be forgot.

Wilf. Yes, if a thing that any fellow hath!
I may forget a diamond, can I find
Another one as rich; but show me one
That is the paragon of all the mine,
And try if that's forgot, though seen but once!
Say that but once I see a beauteous star,
I may forget it for another star;
But say but once I gaze upon the sun,
And name the orb will blot its image out!

Bel. But of a single draught of love to die!

Wilf. Why not? There is your poison, strong and weak;

One kind admits of antidote—one not.
 One by the drachm, one by the scruple, kills :
 Another by the grain—for not in bulk,
 But subtleness, the lethal virtue lies.
 So are there kinds in love! A dozen shafts
 May gall him, and the bounding deer run on,—
 But one shot home, behold he's down at once!

BESS enters with wine, which she places on a table, at some distance from BELMONT and WILFORD; the former sees her at once, and regards her with an expression of fixed admiration—the latter remaining in a state of perfect abstraction.

Bel. E'er saw'st thou thing so fair?

Wilf. What speak'st thou of?

Bel. Yon maid that waits on us.

Wilf. I've seen! I've seen!

Bel. This is to dream!

He sleeps—I'll wake him then. My pretty maid,
 Hand thou the cup to yonder gentleman.

[BESS, whose eyes have just fallen on WILFORD, stands gazing upon him, apparently insensible to everything else.]

What ails the girl? Does she not hear? She's fix'd
 As statue to the pedestal—what is't
 She gazes at? As I'm alive, 'tis he!
 Commend me to a sallow cheek! She's smit,
 If Cupid is a marksman! Maids, I've heard,
 Like books they weep over, the which, the more
 They're made to melt, the greedier they devour!
 See how she reads him! Marry, she will get
 The book by heart!

Bess. 'Tis he! 'tis he! How's this?
 I feel at home the while I look on him!
 Seem near me hearts I know! I could believe
 The roof our own! I scarce would start, were now
 The door to ope, to see my father's face!
 Yet what is he to me? Acquaintance of
 My eyes, whom ne'er they met but once before!

Bel. A shot! a shot! Cupid is in the vein!

Bess. *[Drawing her father's picture from her bosom.]*
 How like! how like! how very—very like!
 There only wants a smile upon the lip—
 I think the lip more sweet the smile away—
 Fie! 'tis my father's lip! My father, then,
 As often I have heard my mother say,
 Had newly won my mother's love—I ween
 My mother then smiled too! Who ought to smile
 If not the maid that's woo'd by him she'd wed?
 Her Bess will never wed!

Bel. A sigh! Be sure
 The arrow's home!

Bess. Just now I felt at home,

And now I feel a thousand miles from home!
 Things, strange before, are now still stranger grown,
 And he most strange of all—the farthest off,
 The least expected ever to be near—

The sight of whom brought home so near to Bess!
 What's Bess's home to him? He'd pass the door,
 And would not know she dwelt there! If he did,
 Would never thank the latch to let him in!
 He has a home, and friends that love him there—
 Friends that he loves. Poor Bess is far from home,
 Was never farther—never half so far!

Hostess [without]. Why, Bess! what, Bess!

Bel. How deep the maiden's trance.

Hostess enters, and goes to her.

Hostess. Why Bess, what ails thee, child?

Bess. [Abstractedly.] Anon! anon!

I'll do it this moment.

Hostess. Do it! what wilt do?

Bess. [Confused and hurriedly.] Whate'er you bid.

Hostess. Why, what has happen'd to her!

Look to the bar till I come back again.

Why Bess, dost hear me, that thou dost not move?

Bess. [Confused.] I'll go this moment—Where am I to go?

Hostess. The girl's bewilder'd! "Where am I to go!"
 Canst tell me what I said to thee just now?

Bess. Thou saidst, I think—or I mistake—thou saidst—
 Thou saidst—perhaps I did not rightly hear;
 Thinking of one thing, one forgets at times
 Another thing—Thou saidst—It was not that—
 Nor that—In sooth, I know not what thou saidst—

Hostess. I knew't. I bade thee go and mind the bar.

Bess. I'll do't. [*Still looking in the direction of WILFORD.*]

Hostess. Thou'lt do't! and go'st thou not to do it?

Yonder's the bar—Why, Bess, thou art asleep!

Thou dreamest! Rouse thee, Bess. Go, mind the bar.

The girl's not like herself!

[*BESS and Hostess go out severally.*]

Bel. A point-blank shot!

An entry this in Cupid's register!

Lord Wilford, was't not noon with you just now?

Wilf. Noon!

Bel. Felt you not the sun?

Wilf. The sun! what sun?

Bel. I' faith a glorious one, but not so kind
 As that which shines by day; for not a beam
 It threw on aught beside. You were its earth—
 The grateful earth unlike—the orb alone
 For which its light seem'd made; absorbing it,
 Without so much as e'en a smile, to show
 You knew't from very darkness!

Wilf. You are merry;

And I can only wonder that you are,—
 As sickness doth, that health can feed, while she
 Herself from rarest viands loathing turns!
 It is not fancy; or, if fancy 'tis,
 'Tis such as breeds reality—as, from
 Imagination only of disease
 Disease itself will grow. Do I but dream?
 Say that the anguish of a probéd wound
 Is but a dream!—Say he that writhes in fire
 Is fancy-haunted—just as much am I!
 See'st not my fever? Is't not in mine eye?
 My cheek? if not, my pulse will show it thee!
 For if its throb be not the counter one
 To that which haleness knows, 'tis anything
 But index of my heart!

Hostess *enters*.

Hostess. Ho! Bess, I say!

Enter BESS, who is immediately perceived by WILFORD, and meeting his eye, stands as transfixed.

Why, Bess, how's this? Is't true thou wast o'erheard
 To one, to two, and three, to give consent,
 When ask'd to be a wife? Art thou not pledged
 To marry Ralph?

Wilf. Is she to be a bride?

Bel. Are you awake?

Wilf. I am! I am!—as one,
 That long at sea pines till he's sick, for land,
 And, ever dreaming on't, starts up at last,
 With the rebound which says his bark has struck,
 And drowns in sight and very reach of it!

Bel. Is that the maid?

Wilf. It is. Now wonder at me!
 Wouldst thou not ask, sprang ever that from earth?
 Look there, and think of an anatomy!
 Can lurk the canker death in such a cheek?
 Is not that flower imperishable, as
 It lodged the virtue of the feignéd one,
 Which never dies—in poet's song yclept
 The immortal amaranth! Is she to be
 A bride? I'll speak to her!

Bel. Thou'rt mad!

Wilf. And if I am,
 Then once at least is madness rational.
 Being what I am, not to be mad as I,
 Were to be kindred to the cloddish brute,
 That looks at her and knows not what it sees!—
 Prevent me not! Art pledged to any one?
 Art thou to be a bride? Say yes or no.

Hostess. Speak, Bess! Say yes! Thou know'st thou'rt
 pledged to Ralph!

Enter RALPH.

Maids, sir, you know, are coy—give me thy hand.
There—art thou now content?

[Places her hand in RALPH'S without her being conscious of it.]

Wilf. Content!—Enough!

O'ermeasure on't! I've done. Yet would I touch
The precious thing, so much I've coveted,
Was ne'er till now in reach of—now, so near—
Find can ne'er be mine!—Whoe'er thou art,
Thou art acquaintance of my heart—as soon
As seen, beloved! I saw thee only once,
That once too oft!—For then I thought upon
My marriage-bell, and wish'd it might be thine,
But now, when thine they ring, they ring my knell!
'Tis not a crime to kiss thy hand, while yet
The banning of the priest forbids me not.
There! Let thy bridegroom at the altar set,
In presence of the watching cherubim,
A truer seal upon thy lip than that
I've fixed upon thy hand—though his shall last
Till doomsday! Take me hence! 'Tis hard to look
At what we wish were ours, and while we do't,
Persuade ourselves it cannot be.—Take me hence!
The only sight of her is hold too strong
For me to struggle 'gainst! It pulls me towards her!
I feel as though she'd suck my vision in!
My breath! my life!—I cannot quit her!

[Breaks from BELMONT and rushes towards her. RALPH interposes. WILFORD seems to have lost all power over himself. BELMONT approaches him to lead him out; but, when at the wing, he turns—gazes distractedly upon BESS.]

Lost!

[Rushes out, followed by BELMONT, and at the same moment BESS sinks senseless on the shoulder of RALPH.]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Front of the Queen's Arms.*

Enter PETER from the Inn, singing.

A white gown and girdle,
A knot of the same;
And come to our wedding,
Both damsel and dame!

Peter. A charming day! A most pleasant day! and pleasant and charming work too—work fit for such a day! Right excellent work! Wedding and feasting! The feasting for me, the wedding for them that like it. For mine own part, holding the sex to be a provocative to wrath, which is sin, I'd sooner hang than wed! But for the feasting—there I'm your man! Roast, boiled, or fried, was never the dish that couldn't warrant me the smoothest-temper'd fellow in Christendom—with the special provision that there was enough on't. I wouldn't say as much of a cup, for a cup is a thing that a man of very oil and sugar will sometimes quarrel over; but, from ale to sack, I defy any man living to say he ever saw me quarrel *with* my cup—barring the liquor was bad, or the cup empty. If I'm not the man for a feast, then never man sat down to one. I could feast it you seven days out of the week, and let him that can, do more. Nay, were there eight days in the week, and the week nothing the longer, I could feast it to the eighth day too. So the good cheer sha'n't lag for me. [*Sings.*

Your bran new jerkins, gallants don,
Or jerkins new, as you may;
But the gallant whose mood is not o' the best,
Were best to stay away.

I'll give them a song. Marry, that can I, when I am tuned to the pitch. I'm none of your sober singers—your trollers of long-winded ballads with a burden to them. I hate your burdens! To be outsung by every knave that has three notes upon his voice. I like to sing alone; but then it must be when the liquor has tuned me to the pitch. Your liquor's a marvellous fine master of singing. When I'm tuned to the pitch, I'd like you to show me the man that can sing better, or the song that's too many for me. Nay, though I know not the air, I'll put one to it. I'll sing them a song—none of your ditties, such as my old master used to grumble.

In love fair Celia fell, O,
With alas! and O! and a well-a-day!
And her love the maid would tell, O,—
Love comes and goes like sun in May!
Above your reach ten feet, O,
With alas! and O! and a well-a-day!
A pear's ten times as sweet, O,—
Love comes and goes like sun in May!
The youth he loved the maid, O,
With alas! and O! and a well-a-day!
But to woo her was afraid, O,—
Love comes and goes like sun in May!
But when her love she told, O,
With alas! and O! and a well-a-day!
His love grew wondrous cold, O,—
Love comes and goes like sun in May!

My moral would you find, O,
 With alas! and O! and a well-a-day!
 No maid should tell her mind, O,—
 Love comes and goes like sun in May!

Enter OLD SMALL as off a Journey.

Old S. I thank thee, fortune! Kind art thou to me!
 He's here! He's here! Why, who should sing that strain
 If not the varlet knave he took with him?
 That can't be he!

Peter. [Aside.] My master's father here!

Old S. Good sir,—

Peter. [Aside.] All's right. He knows me not.

Old S. I pray,
 Heard you a strain just now?

Peter. I know not what you call a strain. I heard a varlet trying to play a tune upon his nose, which I could have pulled for him, 'twas so villanously ill done. If you call that a strain, let never man sing a strain to me! I know when I hear a strain. In a strain there is measure of time, which is the main part of it; measure of tune, which is no indifferent part of it; and measure of voice, which, though it rank not with either of the former, is yet allowed to be a part: but here was neither measure of time, tune, nor voice, but measure enough of the lack of them. If playing a tune upon the nose be a strain, why then I heard a strain just now; but whip me if I'd stand to hear such strain again.

Old S. This could never be he.

Peter. [Aside.] He eyes me hard:

Old S. One question more, good sir. What kind of man was he you heard sing?

Peter. What! your nose-tuner? Why, a tolerable sufficient man—nay, a very sufficient man; say he had the dress of one.

Old S. How was he dressed, I pray you?

Peter. Marry, with cap, jerkin, hose, and shoes; but the cap was out at the crown, the jerkin was out at the elbows, the hose were out all over; and as for the shoes, it would tax a conjurer to find out why he wore them, for the uppers were the most that remained of them, and they were out at the toes. Shirt had he none, or he showed it not; doublet had he ever, his jerkin must have eaten it up; for it was a most incontinent one—a devourer of all kinds of cloth—coarse, middle, fine, and superfine! and of all colours, a superlative sample of patch-work, a very nosegay of a jerkin, saving the odour on't. If he was a gentleman, he was a gentleman in jest; if he was a beggar, he was a beggar in earnest. Service he could never have had; for bowels of flesh and blood could not have committed it, to put a human body into such rat's livery.

Old S. My scarecrow Peter, to a certainty.

Enter YOUNG SMALL from the Inn.

Peter. My master! In, sir! in!

Young S. Why, what's the matter?

Old S. [To PETER.] Worthy sir,—

Peter. Anon—

Young S. My father!

Peter. Fear not,—Knows he not 'tis I.

Young S. Nay, if he finds us out, my fortune's ruined!

Peter. Stay! and I'll rid you of him in a trice.

Old S. Pray you, what gentleman is that?

Peter. Gentleman! Ne'er saw you a lord before?

Old S. Is he a lord?

Peter. Is he a lord!—Look at him! Is he not a lord? Not your lord mayor, forsooth—a lord to-day, a master to-morrow; out an every-day lord—a lord, and no thanks to you; nay, an' he halt at the third hob-nail, yet shall he be a lord. Avoid him, or carry your cap in your hand. He takes measure of state upon him. If you take the wall of him, you may chance to take from the wall to the stocks. It happened no later than yesterday; though, truth to say, the youth was a forward one—one of your care-for-noughts from the city—a fellow that would hector it like a prince, though, six days out of the seven, I warrant you, his father wipes his beard with an apron.

Old S. What! put he him in the stocks?

Peter. Ay did he; and from the stocks into prison, whence if he be not transferred to the gallows, he has more luck than grace.

Old S. How angered he the lord, I pray you?

Peter. Marry, as I said, he took the wall of him; whereat the lord commended the wall to his head; which he not relishing, commended his hand to the lord's cheek; who thereupon commended his body to the stocks, and thence to the prison; whence, when he is delivered, 'twill be upon a release in full, signed by the sheriff, and executed by the hangman—for he is a great lord.

Old S. Alack! so it should seem, sir!—Know you, sir, the name of the youth?

Peter. I heard it, but have forgotten it, and yet have I a memory; but 'twas a very patch of a name. One good substantial name would make three such. 'Twas something like Sprat—or—

Old S. 'Twasn't Small?

Peter. Small was the name!

Old S. Alack, sir, 'tis my son!

Peter. Thy son!—Avoid!—Avoid! Safety for thee lies hence—here, danger! Shares he thy blood, and shalt thou not share his punishment? Would he have transgressed but for thee, who but for thee had never lived to transgress? Shall he on whom treason is fathered hang, and the father of the traitor go free? Avoid, I say! Begone! Fine awaits thee! Imprisonment awaits thee! A halter—awaits thee!

Old S. Might I but have speech
Of that fair lord? Good sir, hast thou his ear?

Look, here are twenty pieces,—speak for me,
And call them thine!

Peter. 'Twould nought avail!

Old S. Good sir,

I'll make the twenty thirty! Take them, sir!

Good thirty pieces only for a word!

Come, then, I'll make the thirty forty! What!

Won't that suffice? What will, then? Sir, you see

A poor old man that has an only son,

Whom he, in evil hour, let go from him,

Thinking that he could live without him, till

The task he tried, but found too hard a one!

Then choice had none except to follow him,

Or stay at home and die! and here is come

To Romford all the way from London, sir,—

On foot, sir!—Take the forty pieces, sir!—

Nay, then, take fifty!—sixty!—all I have!

And only speak a good word for my son.

Young S. Peter, thou'st spoil'd it all! Ne'er heed! ne'er heed!

Thy son is not to hang. [*Speaking with his back towards* OLD S.]

Old S. O thanks for that!

But he's in prison. Ope the door for him,

Although to close't on me! I'll take his place:

Perhaps, of right, I should. I held the lash

And rein—If he's refractory or rash,

Why is he so, but that I used them not?

He better were, had he been better train'd—

That he's not so, his training bear the blame.

That lies with me. Yet was my fault my love—

My too fond love!—so fond, it could not see

How duty could be harsh and yet be kind.

Young S. Father!

Old S. How!—What!—My son! Ah, Thomas, Thomas,

To pass thee on thy father for a lord!

And who is this? Thou varlet—knave—rank knave!

[*To PETER.*]

Young S. Nay, father, well 'twas meant! Thou comest here

To see great things.

Old S. Is this a sample of them?

What kind of jerkin's that for thee to wear?

'Twould suit a lord! And trunks to match withal,

And doublet! Board and lodging for a life

Thou carri'st on thy back! A cap and plume!

Why, for what cobwebs, Thomas, hast thou changed

Thy father's heavy crowns! What's that I see?

Wear'st thou a rapier too! The end of time

Is come! And thou, thou ape—for nothing good

But tricks! Thou mischief! Evil ne'er at rest!

For whom the hide were clothing good enough!

Are these my savings that so shine on thee?

The which to keep, thy master's back more oft
 Went lacking, than provided! Cap and plume
 For thee!—A halter for thee!—Sirrah! I'll to town
 Again. No hope! No help! Discomfort all!
 Care lost! Love wasted! Thomas, fare thee well!
 I shake thy hand, in bitterness, I do!
 I'll strive to live without thee!—To what use?
 I tried, and couldn't do't. *[Falls on his neck.*

Young S. Take not on so!

Or I'll take on. In sooth I will! I'm not
 A stone—a lump of flint—a piece of steel.
 Let our apparel pass—or note it but
 For joy!—for very joy! Thou hast a son
 That's born to fortune!—to high fortune! Know,
 To-day's my wedding day!

Old S. Thy wedding day!

Young S. My wedding day.

Old S. And who's to be thy bride?

Young S. A lady.

Old S. How! Why, wherewithal hast thou
 To keep a lady?

Young S. Keep a lady! No;
 Sufficient 'tis, methinks, I marry her.
 My lady shall keep me. How say you now!
 My lady's blood! She's one that comes of kin—
 That looks for lands and coffers—that is heir
 To titles! Wonder not though thou shouldst have
 A baron to thy grandson! Close accounts,
 And shut up shop!

Old S. I'm all amaze! I'd like
 To see thy bride.

Young S. Thou shalt, but not to speak—
 For, though thy son for gentle state was born,
 Who looks on thee, saw he a counter e'er,
 Bethinks him of a shop; so mightst thou mar
 My fortune.

Old S. Knows she not thy father's calling?
 Thomas! nought prospers like plain-dealing, son!
 But make thy fortune thy own way—thou ne'er
 Wouldst follow mine!

Young S. Content thee, father, that
 My fortune 's made! E'en follow us to church;
 But not a word until the knot be tied,
 And I be fast and sure a gentleman!
 Hoa, Kate! Sweet Kate! E'er saw you lady, father?
 You now shall look on one! The form of lady,
 The air of lady—face of lady—yea
 The eyes, nose, mouth, and cheeks of lady. Kate!
 Come forth, my bride!

Kate. *[Coming to the door.]* Who calls?

Young S. Your bridegroom, Kate.
 To church! to church!

Kate. Before my bridemaïd comes!

Young S. Thy bridemaïd, Kate, is not to marry thee,
But I, and I am here! so loiter not,
The sexton's part is done—the doors are oped!
The clerk is ready with his horn and pen;
The parson's gown'd, and standing by the book;
The merry bells are on the watch to ring—
There want but thee and me; so come to church!

Kate. Without a bridemaïd, I should be ashamed!

Young S. How delicate! Your bridemaïd yonder comes;
So come, my lady Kate!

Kate. Heigho!

Young S. How sweet!
Lean on me, Kate.

Kate. I fear to take thy arm.

Young S. How elegant! Nay, Kate—

Kate. But if I must—

Young S. How like a lady doth she carry her
In all things! Bear up, Kate; Take courage, Kate!
Come on! Now warrant me a gentleman! [*They go out.*]

Music without.—Enter WILFORD and BELMONT.

Wilf. Love plies the rack on which itself is stretch'd!
Tell it of solace, and 'twill talk of pain,
Which 'tis its piteous profit to augment!
So far unlike, love's merchant is to him
That trades for self. He hears his venture's sunk,
And cries, "'Tis gone!"—tries to forget his loss—
Hoists up fresh hope, and launches other freight.
No other freight for him that trades in love!
His venture haply founder'd—no new hope;—
His dreamy day of speculation's done!
His breast hath room for nothing, but the thought
How many fathom deep his treasure lies!
He has no use for life, except to make
Its cheek a feast for comfortless despair;
Nor ever smiles again, except to see
How fast it wastes away!

Bel. The lover's tune!

Wilf. They come to carry her to church! To own
The happy hand she'll take to lead her there,
Would I forego the clasp of Fortune's own,
And all her gifts of rank and wealth refund!

Bel. Yet gave she these in kindness. By their means
Your love might prosper yet. What need you do,
But doff this sordid guise, appear yourself,
And ask and have her?

Wilf. No! not even her
For their deserts!—Myself! What's of myself
That is not here? Call I the prouder suit
I should put on—myself? Call I my title,
No merit of mine own achieved—myself?

They're nought of me but what a knave might wear
 As well as I! My ardent soul's myself!—
 My heart, too proud to be in fortune's debt,
 Where worth, alone, should win—myself! My mind
 That its chief store by nature's riches sets
 With this its vassal case, such as it is—
 Myself!—The only self I'd use or thank.
 To win me love or friend! So end my part
 What it began! I'll look once more upon her!

[Retires with BELMONT.]

Enter RALPH and Hostess, meeting.

Hostess. Ralph, where's thy bride?

Ralph. She's in her chamber still.

Hostess. Then bring her forth.

Ralph. She will not come for me.

Hostess. For what

Delays she thus? Her bonnet's trimm'd—Her coif
 She has—I sent her in her wedding-gown
 An hour ago, I'm certain 'twas a fit!
 I'll fetch her forth myself.

[Enters the house.]

Enter YOUNG SMALL and KATE, followed by OLD SMALL and PETER.

Young S. Joy! Give me joy!

Ralph. How, sir;—so soon at church! The knotting done!

Young S. E'en so, good master Ralph!—Father, my bride—

Kate. Thy father!

Young S. Even so, my pretty Kate!

The father of thy Thomas! Let him know
 From thy own tongue—nor him, alone, but all men,
 The kind of wife his Thomas, whom he thought
 A fool—an ass—a ne'er-do-well—hath won.

Kate. And thought thy father ever thus of thee?

Young S. No matter what he thought! Convince him, Kate,
 What now, and ever hence, behoves him think.

Father and friends, my wife. Now, Kate, disclose

Thy kin, my Kate—thy kin, my lady Kate?

Kate. Anan?

Young S. Anan! Thy kin?

Kate. Anan?

Young S. Thy kin?

Thy house? thy family? thy pedigree?

Kate. Anan?

Young S. Anan again!

Whence drawest thou thy noble blood, my Kate?

How comest it to thee? Is it by the male

Or female side? The lands thou'rt heiress to—

The titles that shall fall to thee?—In right

Of whom expectest them?

Enter STRAP, half tipsy.

Strap. Fine doings here!

A wedding! So!—I'll thank you for a knot
For honest master Strap.

Young S. Peace, fellow!—Peace!

The knotting's done.

Strap. O then the bride's a wife.

No doubt, good sirs, you've all had kisses round;
So now my turn is come. Sir, by your leave!

Young S. Out, knave! Thou art full of ale.

Strap. A lucky day

For thee, when thou art full of aught so good!
I say I'll have a kiss.

Young S. What art thou?

Strap. What?

A cobbler.

Young S. What!—A fellow kiss my wife,
That is not master even of a craft!

Strap. That shows thy wisdom! Cobbling is the chief
Of crafts.

Young S. The chief!—You hear him, masters! Chief
Of crafts—I question if the half of one!—

Yea, third of one! A cordiner's a craft;

He makes the shoe, the cobbler only mends,

And so's no better than a patch, a botch,

A nail, a tack, a stitch—A cobbler!—What!

A cobbler kiss my wife!—an awl—a piece

Of wax and packthread—and the bristle of

A hog—and there's a cobbler! Hark thee, Kate?

Couldst bear of such a lout to take a kiss?

No! never common gentlewoman could!

Far less, a dame of title, and by birth.

Strap. Young man, a sober word or two with thee:
Thou'rt drunk, or mad—or both—Thou knowest not

What cobbling is! 'Tis part of every trade,

And the chief part,—No trade but hath its cobbler.

Your law hath cobblers, your divinity,

Your surgery, your physic. There are cobblers

In merchandise and war. Who does not know

What cobblers are there 'mongst your politicians?

If that should be a craft which is most follow'd,

Then cobbling is a craft—Ay, chief of crafts.

Young S. Well hast thou argued it! yet provest thou not
Thy right to kiss my bride!

Strap. Of new-made bride

'Tis right of any one to take a kiss;

So prithee stand aside.—Nay, wilt thou not,

Thou'lt learn, belongs he to a trade or not,

A cobbler is a man! But no—no broil

Upon a wedding-day. That were not like

A cobbler! Come—a bargain, sir—I'll leave it

To your lady.

Young S. Gives she leave, you're welcome, sir—
Small likelihood of that!

Strap. Fair lady!—what!
Slut! hussy! vixen! wanton! cockatrice!

Young S. How, knave?

Strap. Knave!—She's the knave! Prevent me not.
I'll call her what I list, sir—What I list
I'll do to her. [*Embraces her.*] Make rosin of her!—pack-
thread!

Nail her unto a last, for bridegroom!—Take
Strap, hammer, pincers to her!—turn her
Into thongs and shoe-strings!—Wherefore should I not,
That am her father!

Young S. What?

Strap. O run-away!

Oh, vixen! mad-cap! Oh, my daughter, Kate,
And have I found thee?

Kate. Father, I'm married—
And married unto a gentleman!

Strap. [*Seeing OLD SMALL.*] Odzooks!
Good master Small!—Factor of minikins
And corking-pins—of pins of all degrees!—
Hearing that thou hadst traced thy thriftless child
To Romford here, and having lost my own,
Good fortune put it in my crazy pate
To follow thee,—and lo! what speed I've come!
My daughter's found—and doubly found!—She says
She's married to a gentleman!—Hast found
Thy son?

Old S. Yes, master Strap, he's there.

Strap. This he!

So, sirrah! jackanapes! And have I craved
Thy leave to kiss thy bride? Scorn'st thou me now?
And if thou dost, thou art my son-in-law—
Yea, thou art married to a cobbler's daughter.
But what of that? If not a gentleman,
A cobbler is the king of jolly fellows!

Ralph. Kate! shall I now doff cap unto thy spouse?

Kate. Yes; if thou dost what fits thee, best, to do.

Ralph. Thy gentleman hath dwindled to a pin!

Kate. A pin that's worth a bush of thorns, like thee!

Ralph. Give you much joy, good sir! You've wed your match;
Who doubts it, let him!—I will swear thy bride
A lady—much as thou'rt a gentleman!

Nay, frown not—

[*Good-humouredly.*

Young S. Frown! who ever saw me frown?
I have lost all day at loggats, and I'd thank
The man, could say, he ever saw me frown!
Come, Kate!—Come, fathers both.

Kate. Wilt take me, sir?

Young S. Take thee! Have I not taken thee? I will—
And keep thee too, so thou wilt let me, Kate.

[*YOUNG SMALL, KATE, OLD SMALL, STRAP, and
PETER retire.*

Enter Hostess from house.

Hostess. I vow the girl's bewilder'd! "Yes" and "no,"
And "no" and "yes," are all you get from her!
Nor, yet, will she come forth.—Is that her step?
It is. She comes.

Enter BESS, dressed as the Beggar's Daughter.

Why, Bess, are you not dress'd?
In trim like that went ever bride to church?

Ralph. Trim good enough for me. Come then, my bride;
Come, pretty Bess! Your hand to go to church!

Bess. I go not, sir, a bride, to church with you.

Wilf. [*Aside.*] Hope, hearty friend! art thou come back
to me!

I see thee, yet can scarce believe I do,
So sure I thought we had for ever parted!

Welcome, O welcome!

Hostess. Gavest thou not consent
To marry Ralph?

Bess. Consent I could not give!
Your heart imagined, only, what it wish'd,
In single, earnest generosity!

The hand he covets, others' rights demand
Disposal of—I have parents.

Ralph. Where are they?

Bess. Alas! I know not; but I go to seek them!

Ralph. Who are thy parents then, my pretty Bess?
Tell me, sweet Bess?

Hostess. Sweet Bess, thy father's name?

Ralph. What is thy father?

Bess. The Blind Beggar, sir,
Of Bethnal Green.

Young S. You see I might have wed
A beggar, father. Give me praise for that,
My Kate, a kiss! Come to our wedding cheer!

[*YOUNG SMALL, KATE, OLD SMALL, STRAP, and
PETER go out.*]

Ralph. Sweet Bess, hadst thou for father, craftsman low
As low can be, I should be well content
To call him father, too; a beggar, though,
Is father none for me.

[*RALPH goes out.*]

Hostess. Hold up thy head,
My pretty Bess! Thou'rt bride too good for him!
Above his mark! Shame on them! shame! I would
I knew the man were worth thee, Bess.

Wilf. What kind
Of man were he?

Hostess. Why, likely, such as thou,
For looks!—Though I've seen better.—Met we not
Before?—'Amerey!—Yesternight we did,
When thou wast raving of knells, and wedding-bells!

For love of Bess! Art now in raving mood?
Or have thy wits, last night, a roaming gone,
Return'd with this fair morning? Come, confess,
Thou'rt brother to my son!

Wilf. Of none, good dame,
Who slight that maid!

Hostess. What! wouldst thou take her, then?

Wilf. Not take her, dame!

Hostess. I knew't.

Wilf. You're over quick!

You stop my speech, nor know the way 'twould run!

Hostess. 'Twould run? It runs, I wot, no other way
Than that of half thy sex, when they find out
A woman's dower's herself!

Wilf. You wrong me, dame!

Hostess. Why, said you not you would not take the maid?

Wilf. I grant I did; but—

Hostess. But! Give me no buts!
Say downright no at once!—"but this—but that;
You love us—but! You'd wed us—but!" As much
You'd love as you would wed! You'd wed, be sure,
If sure you loved! Yet you *do* love, you say,
But cannot wed,—and love, indeed you do;
But—in your own coin, to be quits with you,
You love her not for herself!

Wilf. I' faith, not so!

And to convince you that your thought doth hold
The counter-course to that my wishes steer,
I'll say I'd take the maid; but—

Hostess. There!

Wilf. Nay, peace!

Thwart not my soul, of which to judge the love,
Thou must partaker of its essence be.

Take her!—Take fortune, honours, fame!—They're things

We hunt for!—They're the eager chase that so

Inspirits us,—despite its length, its stops,

Its perils, its escapes, and accidents,—

We keep it up with cheer!—and what are these

To this excelling maid?—I would not take—

For that were to suppose a thing obtain'd,

Untoil'd, and unadventured for—I'd win her!

Hostess. And worthy were to win! How say you, Bess?

Wilt thou to church be led by him? Nor "no,"

Nor "yes?" I marvel what a maid would say,

Who, when she's ask'd to church, but hangs her head!

Is't "no?"—"No," Bess?—An angel to a crown

'Tis "no!" but "no" to "no," that answers "no."

Sweet Bess, hadst e'er thy fortune read to thee?

Show me thy hand. How white a thing it is!

What's here? Here's line, and line, and ne'er a cross—

A lucky hand! Look! Saw you e'er the like?

Methinks this hand betokeneth a maid

Not like to wed—for wedlock's still, you know,
The cross of womankind! She'll never wed!
You think she will, I see, and doubt my skill?
Then try your own, and read the hand yourself.

[*Puts BESS's hand into WILFORD's.*]

Wilf. This precious hand, had I the skill to read,
Great as the will, and nuptials it foretold,
Ne'er destined e'er be mine, I'd wish it well!
Though what built up its hope, made wreck of mine!
If adverse was its promise!—lucklessness
Through life,—unpurchased foes,—unstable friends,—
Afflictions,—beggary, in all—but love—
And I the one to keep thee rich in that!—
'Fore hands, with fortune's fairest pledges writ,
I'd covet thine, and for that only gift,
Compound for all beside! Didst press my hand?
Thou didst!—Thou didst!—Deny it not, while stands
That glowing witness on thy modest cheek,
To back my tongue! Love's joyous day is come!
And that's the dawn, or never yet did beam
His golden sun on earth! And I to be
Its harbinger to her! Come, let us seek
Thy parents! Rich enough are they for me,
Whose blessing leaves me not a wish to bless!

LORD THOMAS WILLOUGHBY *enters with Attendants.*

Will. 'Tis she! For once hath rumour spoken truth!

[*Aside.*]

Base hind, forbear, nor lock thy arms on one
Thy knee were much too graced to wait upon—
And straight resign to me my peerless bride;
For know, whom thou esteem'st a beggar's child,
Is daughter to a baron of descent,
The highest in the land.

Wilf. A baron's child!
And bride of thine!

Bess. Oh, no!—No baron's child!
My father is a wandering beggar-man!
I would not be a baron's child:—yea, child
Unto a king—and least of all be bride to him!

Will. I swear thou art a baron's child;—I swear
Thou art my bride;—Such gives thee out the tongue,
Whose word is law, 'twere treason to dispute!

Wilf. What say'st thou, Bess?

Bess. I'm bride to none but thee!
Thou that wouldst wed me, though a beggar's child,
Were I a baron's child, shouldst wed me still!
Take mind for mind, and heart for heart from me!
I saw thee, and I loved thee!—Grows my tongue
Too bold?—Forgive it for the bashfulness
That could not pay thy love with one poor word,
Until another dared dispute with thee

What eye, and ear, and heart, and soul, and all
 Bear witness is thine own!—Where are thine arms?
 Or didst thou mock me, calling me their treasure?

[WILFORD clasps her in his arms]
Will. [*Drawing his sword.*] Forbear, I say!—Thy life's in jeopardy!

Lo! the commands of her whose will behoves
 The proudest not to question. [*Gives a paper.*]

Wilf. [*Reading.*] What, to thee!
 Convicted here of violence,
 Offer'd to her, thou now wouldst make thy bride!
 Not for the queen will I resign her to thee. [*Drawing too.*]

Will. You talk it mightily!

Wilf. I'll do it too.

Look you,—a man will let one take his life,
 Ere he'll give up his purse, and that, perhaps,
 Will hold a score of crowns! It hath been done
 For less! Come, state the sum thou'dst set against her!
 What's its amount? Come, name't. Couldst borrow it
 From usury? Couldst find it in the mint?
 In that which feeds the mint—the unwasting mine?
 Couldst eke it out with diamonds, and the rest
 Of all the brood of gems? Couldst fancy it?
 And shall I give her up, that have the right
 To keep her? Never with my will! She's mine!
 You see she is! You see her choice no less
 Holds her to me, than do the arms, my soul,
 With force of thousand arms, now locks upon her.
 Advance an inch, thy life's not worth a straw!

Hostess. A spark! A spark among a thousand! Take
 His word, good sir, he's one that says and does!
 The man for me I'd wed, were I a maid! [*Music without.*]

Will. Abide the cost of your rebellion, slave!
 The queen herself is here!

[*March. Procession as before: QUEEN, &c. QUEEN
 dismounts.*]

Queen. Ha, swords without their cases! Who is she
 That so our vision dazzles, distancing
 All it hath seen of nature's cunning'st fairness?
 Ha!—You that have the charge of him, lead forth
 The Beggar of Bethnal Green.

Bess. My parents!

Al. and Emma. Bess!

Queen. I knew it must be she. Hast found her, sir?
 The star that look'd upon thy birth was fair;
 For, had she been, indeed, a beggar's child,
 She yet had been thy bride. The truant ring
 That late betray'd thee, still was faithful to thee!

This hour, your nuptials shall be solemnized!

Bel. Contain thyself!—Her hand she'll never give.

Wilf. Does she—she may! Refuses she, let him
 That dares, attempt to take it!

Hostess. Hold to that;
I would were I a man!

Queen. Yet,—ere we tax
The labour of the priest,—her parents' rank,
To me and to this lord, alone, divulged,
Besits it others know. That document
Which to our hand her father late confided,

[*To Attendant. Paper is brought, QUEEN reads.*
Lord Woodville read; and say, concerns thee aught
This history? [*Giving him the paper.*

Wood. It does! If truth it speaks—
Which doubt I not—the beggar is my brother;
A brother, who, when living, ne'er from me
Received a brother's right, but hate for love;
And yet whose death to love converted hate.

Alb. Octavius!

Wood. Albert!

Alb. Brother!

Wood. O forgive,
And with thy lands receive thy brother back! [*They embrace.*

Queen. My chaplain, ho!
Come tie the knot!

Wilf. I have a feeling now
Of what it is to die—the heavy pause,
Ere life goes out!

Queen. What wait you for, sir priest?

Chaplain. Her hand to give, the maid refuses.

Queen. How!

Wilf. She does! She's true! She's mine!

Queen. Who's he that speaks?

Wood. A peasant, please your majesty!

Will. A hind,

Your grace, who claims my bride!

Wilf. Thy bride? She's mine!

Prize of my love, proud lord! that coveted

Her love when she was low, as now she's high,

And won it!—won it!—won, what all thy gold,

Thy lands, thy honours, thy alliances,

Could never win for thee!—what, peasant as

I am, makes me the peer, that would not change

Condition with thee, wast thou twice as high!

Hostess. A spark to win a woman!

Will. Villain, hence.

Wilf. Proud lord, I fling the foul term back at thee!

Nor call thee villain mere, but traitor foul!

Who knew'st thy mistress was a virgin queen,

Yet strovest to rob a virgin of her pride,

By villain force! Ha! do I make thee blench?

Cower'st thou before me, peasant though I am?

Has not the blood of all thy noble line

The power to hearten thee, and make thee stand

Erect in presence of the nameless brow

That's bent upon thee with an honest scowl?
 Command'st me hence?—Hence rather thou, and learn
 Whose merits, mean, behind their titles lag
 Were better go undubb'd,—whilst lowest hind
 That's lord of noble deed, is lord enough!

Queen. Secure that hind who dares to brave a lord.

Bess. O great and royal mistress! rate him not
 By what he seems. If nature marketh blood,
 Then is the peasant of condition fair,
 As any in your court!—If to be high—
 If to be truly gentle—be to shine;
 In valiant bearing, generosity,
 Love, which the eye of fortune follows not
 For guidance where to smile,—a noble and
 The noblest noble should the peasant be!
 O sovereign, gracious, that art mistress of
 A woman's costliest heart, look down on mine,
 Which through mine eyes looks humbly up to thee!
 And let me not for bankrupt pass in love,
 Disinterestedness, and constancy,
 With all the means and all the will to pay!
 Give him the baron's daughter, who would take
 The beggar's child to wife!

Queen. It must not be!

Al. Most gracious queen, a picture wears my child,
 The likeness of her father ta'en in his youth;
 Command her show it you.

Queen. That picture, girl! [*Bess gives the picture.*]
 Feature for feature 'tis the peasant's own!—
 A light breaks in upon me—My Lord Woodville,
 Where is that truant son of thine, we wont
 In sport to dub our hero of romance?

Wood. Your grace, an age it is since I have seen him.

Queen. Enough! a pretty masque it is, they play! [*To Bess.*]
 I'll try the mettle of her constancy.
 Give me this bauble, and that other one
 Thou wearest in thy heart, throw far from it;
 For, by our title to the crown we wear,
 We vow no peasant e'er shall call thee wife!

Bess. Recall—Recall the vow!

Queen. Recall thy heart,
 If thou hast given it him.

Bess. I cannot do't.

Queen. No?

Bess. No! He is its owner—master—lord!
 Yes, I avow it, peasant though he is!
 I could not take it from him, if I would!
 I would not were he less, if less could be!
 No, not to give it to the proudest he
 That glitters in your court!

Al. Oh, thwart her not,
 Most gracious mistress,—From adversity

I've learn'd instruction, makes me venerate
 Deeds more than circumstances. His approve
 That much he loves my child—Her heart is his.
 I would not from her heart her hand disjoin,
 For gain of all the world!

Queen. He dies for this!

Nay, gasp not, maid! 'Tis but the peasant dies,
 To give thee, in a baron's noble heir,
 The lover whom thy constancy hath won!—
 Whose constancy hath rich reward in thee.
 Young lord, thou see'st how fortune, to revenge
 The wrong thou wouldst have done this noble maid,
 When thou esteemd'st her of low degree,
 Now that she proves fit partner for thy bed,
 Consigns her to another's worthier arms! [*To LORD THOMAS.*
 We pardon thee thy trespasses, atoned
 By loss of sight, and long privations borne. [*To ALBERT.*
 Lord Woodville, join thy niece to thine own son,
 For there indeed he stands; and greetings spare,
 Until we see their nuptials solemnized;
 Which we ourselves under our conduct take.
 Pageant and masque shall grace their wedding-day,
 And poets vie while they rehearse the tale
 Of Bess, the beggar's maid of Bethnal Green!

END OF THE BEGGAR OF BETHNAL GREEN,



THE DAUGHTER.

A Play.

TO JOHN GARDNER, ESQ.

(LATE OF GLASGOW; NOW OF APALACHICOLA, IN WEST FLORIDA.)

MY DEAR JOHN,

Accept the Dedication of this Play, as a small
acknowledgment of a large debt of Friendship...

Yours gratefully,

and affectionately,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

LONDON,

29th November, 1836.

THE BAY OF BODEN **DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.**

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT DRURY LANE IN 1836.)

<i>Robert</i>	(Father to Marian)	....	Mr. KNOWLES.
<i>Norris</i>			Mr. WARDE.
<i>Wolf</i>	(Friend to Norris)	....	Mr. DIDDEAR.
<i>Edward</i>	(In love with Marian)	..	Mr. COOPER.
<i>Clergyman</i>			Mr. MATTHEWS.
<i>Philip</i>	{ (Wreckers)	.....	Mr. BAKER.
<i>Ambrose</i> ..			Mr. F. COOKE.
<i>Stephen</i>			Mr. BRINDAL.
<i>Jailer</i>			Mr. HENRY.
<i>Constable</i>			Mr. FENTON.
<i>Bailiff</i>			Mr. MEARS.
<i>Marian</i>	(In love with Edward)		Miss HUDDART.

SCENE—THE COAST OF CORNWALL.

THE DAUGHTER.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Shore on the Coast of Cornwall.*

Enter PHILIP, AMBROSE, and others.

Phil. Our craft is scandalized! We strip the dead!
But what of that? The dead but want a grave!
We give it them. We take what they can spare.

Amb. You're right; we do no more!

Phil. As to the rights
Of the living, whom they leave behind; let men
Look to their own! If not, why let it go!
Is it for us to stand the drenching rain!
Wade to our necks into the sea! perhaps
Take boat and pull among the breakers, at
The peril, every moment, of our lives,
For their behoof, while they lie snug in bed,
Loll o'er their fires, or sit around their feasts?
Methinks there's reason in the wrecker's trade!

Amb. There is. He risks, and toils, for what he gets.

Phil. But then he does no mischief to the dead,
More than the waves have done!—and if there be
Among us, one that does, he's not of us.
'Those marks of violence, which hands alone,
Not rocks, and waves, that have not hands, can leave,
Are scandal to our name!

Amb. 'Tis clear, foul play
Has oft of late been done, and chiefly there

Enter NORRIS.

Where Norris takes his stand! What right has he
To make that reef his own?

Nor. Who talks of me? —
What of Black Norris?—Humph!—You envy him!
"What right has he to make that reef his own?"
The right you all would stand on, if you could—
The right of might!

Phil. Who thought of seeing him?
Who dream'd that he was near?

Nor. I am a dark
And surly man!—Am I the worse for that?
May not the heart that's here, be soft as yours?

The man that's ever smiling, still speaks soft—
 And no one here would pass for such a man—
 I'd never trust! He'll prove a hypocrite!
 The sky doth change its 'haviour—'tis no rogue;
 And why not man that lives beneath the sky,
 If he be honest? Marks of violence
 On bodies wash'd ashore! You want to know
 How they came there? I'll tell you—Why, by hands!
 Is not that frank?—I'll tell you something more—
 'Twas not by mine. It follows not, because
 The hair is rough, the dog's a savage one!

Amb. 'Tis true.

Nor. Come, come, hang no man for his looks!
 The thing's disgrace! Let's put a stop to it;
 And each man do his best, to find him out,
 That brings the shame upon us—be it me,
 Or you, or him, or whomsoe'er it may;
 And hunt him not by looks! Such hounds—you know
 What hounds are, I suppose—are oft at fault!
 Sleek looks may be companions to rough hearts!
 I have found it many a time! As for the reef
 You say I make my own—you're welcome to it!
 But take it if you dare. [*Aside—goes out.*]

Amb. We've done him wrong.

Phil. I know not.

Amb. Think the best! Come; in the end
 It may be as he says. Whate'er we've thought,
 No guilt has been brought home to him—although
 His father is no better than he should be,
 And sees far lands, by favour of the law.
 Let's keep awake! Each think the watch his own!
 Whispers grow loud, and we must silence them,
 Else we'll be look'd to, and our trade at end!
 [*They go out on different sides.*]

SCENE II.—*Cliffs—with the Shore in the Distance—A Ship in the Offing.*

Enter EDWARD and MARIAN, hand in hand.

Edw. Look blithe, my pretty Marian! The true heart
 Should ne'er be a misgiving one!—My girl,
 My gentle girl, look blithe—Didst ever see
 So fair a day?—There's scarce a cloud in sight!
 The breeze is just the one our vessel likes;
 Jib, spanker, all will draw! Tight-water boat,
 Stanch crew, bold captain,—Marian, what's to fear?

Mari. Absence, that gives to lovers taste of death,
 And long protracted makes them wish for death,
 So wearisome to bear! When last you left,
 So long you stay'd,—life, from a precious gift,

Became a load, methought I could lay down,
 Nor deem it loss, but gain!—my constant thought,
 How time still broke his promise, day by day,
 To bring thee back to me. Oh! of the sighs
 I have heaved in an hour I could have found a wind,
 Had I the cunning to make store of them,
 Would cause thy ship to heel! There have I sat,
 From coming in to going out of light,
 Perch'd, like a lonely beacon, on the cliff,
 Watching for thee;—and if I saw a speck,
 I thought thee there; and, when it pass'd away,
 I felt the pangs of parting o'er again!—
 How long wilt be away?

Edw. A month.

Mari. Say two!

I'll make my mind up to two months—and then,
 If thou return'st before the time, thou know'st
 It will be usury of happiness!
 Thou'lt stay two months!—Two months is a long time!

Edw. I tell thee but a month!

Mari. I'll not believe it;

For, if I should, and thou beyond shouldst stay,
 Each hour beyond will be another month!
 So, for my two months, I may pine two-score!
 Nay, for two months I will not look for thee!

Edw. And then we marry!

Mari. So my father says.

Edw. O Marian, when thou'rt mine!

Mari. Thou wilt not go

Again to sea.

Edw. No, girl!—Another trip,

We are rich enough! How love hath made us wise!
 When boy and girl, we talk'd as man and wife;
 And 'gan to hoard 'gainst days of housekeeping.
 Our first small venture—what a heap it brought!
 Its value more than ten times doubled! 'Twas
 That Heaven did bless it!—Marian, that's the luck!
 And since that lucky day, whate'er we've tried
 Has thriven with us still.

Mari. Thank Heaven, it has.

Edw. Ay!—And the saint who taught me, on her knee,
 "No life so happy as an honest one!"—
 Thy mother!—Thy dear mother, Marian.—

Mari. She loved thee!

Edw. Yes!—What were a wrecker's gains
 Compared to ours? To think that they're our own!
 None to dispute them with us!—No, not e'en
 A dead man's bones! I have kept my watch, on deck,
 In a gale, the billows higher than our cliffs;
 That, looking from their tops, you wonder'd how
 The vessel could go down, and rise again;
 While, as she heel'd until her yard-arms duck'd,

You thought each moment shroud and brace would crack,
 And every mast at once go overboard!—
 Thus have I kept my watch; and then I've found
 The best of treasures was a conscience, clear!
 And with my venture in my chest below,
 Would not have changed that slanting, creaking deck,
 To take the wrecker's station on the shore,
 With wind and wave at work, and breaking up
 A fast and rich galleon! Marian,
 Why dost thou hang thy head?

Mari. My father is
 A wrecker.

Edw. So was mine, my Marian.
 What then? We're not the children of their trade!
 Pass but another month—Well, I'll say two—
 And change of state shall bring us change of scene!
 We'll quit these haunts, and ply some inland calling!
 Why turn'st thou pale, my girl? What frightens thee?
 I only see Black Norris—Fear'st thou him?

Mari. Yes!—No!—I fear, yet know not cause to fear—
 No just cause!—Yet—Thank Heaven he's gone again!

Edw. He dared offend thee once, but paid the forfeit;
 And durst not offer wrong to thee again!
 Hast other cause to fear him, Marian?

Mari. When last you were at sea, the weary nights
 Thy mother and thy Marian beguiled,
 As ever in thy absence they were wont,
 With talk of thee; and growing sad with that,
 Old tales of marvel, from her ample store,
 The kindly dame would tell—Peace to her spirit!—
 I shall not have her now to comfort me!

Edw. Don't speak of that! Go on.

Mari. One dreary night,
 A wrecker was the story—banish'd son,
 And worse than banish'd father! that watching was
 A vessel fast upon the Goodwin Sands—

Edw. I know!—The body of a man was wash'd
 Ashore. The wrecker fell to rifling it,
 But life was in the body.

Mari. That's the tale.
 The wrecker heard him groan—so, conscience-wrung,
 The wretch confess'd—and to secure his prey,
 Destroy'd what Heaven had bade the tempest spare;
 Stopp'd with his hands the holy breath of life,
 And watching, for assurance that the work
 Of foulest sin was done, by the wild glare
 Of the lightning, which, that moment, rent the clouds,
 And lighted up the ghastly scene of blood,
 Beheld the feature of his banish'd boy,
 On his own beach, by his own father murder'd.

Edw. But what hath this to do with him, the sight
 Of whom recall'd the tale?

Mari. His father is
A convict, serving in a distant land.
His term of shame, almost expired; for crime
Done on the storm-strewn shore.

Edw. I know he is.

Mari. I mused on them, as by thy mother's hearth
I sat; which soon, methought, began to spread
Into our bay—a furious tempest on,—
Men, women, children watching here and there,
On the look-out for some unlucky barque,
Its wrath might catch, and strand upon the shore!
There was the lightning, and the thunder, and
The rain and wind, and rattling shingles, as
The billows, mountain high, came tumbling in,
And there stood Norris, on that reef of his.

Edw. Go on, as 'twere a real tale thou told'st,
Thou fixest me, with eagerness to hear.

Mari. Then came a vessel—a huge hulk—without
A single mast left standing!—Such a one
Was wreck'd upon the coast three winters gone,
When thou wast far at sea—I witness'd it.

Edw. Well; but the ship you fancied?

Mari. Long she heaved,
And sank, and reel'd, until at last she struck
Right on the wrecker's reef; where soon she went
To pieces.—Then, the body of a man
Was wash'd on shore, and Norris sprang upon it;
But life, as in the story I had heard,
Was in it still; and Norris took that life!
He stabb'd the shipwreck'd man—and lo! it was
His father!—In my sleep I dream'd, that night
The self-same thing. And often, since, in sleep,
Ay, and in waking too, have seen't again—
Have seen the bay, the tempest, and the ship
The body floating in, and Norris there,
Rifling it of its life—the body of
His father! Strange things have been thought of
him;

And never look I on that scowling man,
But with the thought, I see a murderer!—
But thou art going, and I talk of him!
I know not wherefore, but I never felt
So sad before at parting!

Edw. Fear'st for me?

Mari. No!—Thou art good—Hast trust in Heaven
—implorest

Its mercy night and morn! 'Twill show it thee!
Thou'lt find it 'mid the tempest—near the shoal
Off the lee-shore!—or, if thy vessel strike,
Or founder, surer than the sea-bird's wing,
The sea-bird, it will float thee 'bove the wave,
And bear thee to thy native cliff again!

I have no fears for thee!—I think—I know
Thou wilt come back to me! Thou hast no fears?

Edw. None, Marian!

Mari. But thou hast!—I'm sure thou hast!

I see a trouble in thy face!—I do!

Thou fear'st for something!—What is it?

Edw. I would

Thou hadst not told me of Black Norris.

Mari. Why?

See'st aught in what I told thee?—Dost thou think
My dream bodes ill?—that something's sure to come?

Think'st thou there's aught in dreams? Don't answer me!
I don't believe there is!

Edw. There is not, girl!

Mari. Why wish, then, what thou didst?

Edw. He gives thee pain.

Mari. I will not see him again! I nothing see
When thou'rt away. The sun, the earth, the sea—
All things without are gone—I have no eye,
No ear—except within—within, where, only,
Then, can I see and hear thee!—where I'm with thee
At sea—ashore—and oft in hardest strait
Of peril—where I'm always close to thee,
With superhuman power to bear thee through,
In spite of wildest danger! There's the gun!

Edw. Farewell!—

Mari. I'll see thee to the beach!—I will—
Ay, to the water's edge! That I could go
Along with thee!—The waves might rise and roar,
I would not hear or see them!—Come!

Edw. Nay, here

We'll part—my messmates, girl, will laugh at thee.

Mari. Let them! What! lose a minute—with an age
To come, of absence—I, that would brave the sea
To go with thee, heed those its surges toss!
I'll go with thee e'en to the water's edge!
And then mine eyes shall go along with thee!
And when thou leavest them, and they give o'er,
My thoughts—my heart—my soul—which water, land,
Air, nothing 'neath the sun can tear thee from! [*They go out.*]

SCENE III.—*The inside of ROBERT'S Cottage. ROBERT seated in the centre, occupied in splicing an oar.*

Enter STEPHEN—a lad.

Rob. Well, Stephen! what of the ship?

Ste. She's under way

With every yard of canvas spread.

Rob. The wind

Is fair?

Ste. A point, or more, abaft the beam ;
A gentle breeze, and steady.

Rob. So it seems.

'Twill change ere night !

Ste. I see no signs of it.

Rob. You do not know them when you see them, Stephen !

Though a good sailor, you're a young one yet !

But I'm an old acquaintance of the weather.

"A point," you say, "or more, abaft the beam?"

Then is the vane north-west. Ne'er heed the vane,

Look ever to the cloud, the weathercock

Behoves the shipman heed, which tells what wind

Will come. How steers the cloud ?

Ste. North-west.

Rob. That's right

Against the ship which now sails with the wind !

Now mark my words ! Ere night the wind will take

Her merry sails aback, and talk to her !

And bid her clew her gay topgallants up !

There will be call for reefs, and work for sheets

And halyards ! "Fore-sheet, fore-top-bowling !"

Will keep throughout the night a busy watch !

But she'll have sea-room, and no gull more safe

Sitteth the wave than she. Here ! Lend a hand.

[STEPHEN goes to ROBERT and assists him.

Where's Marian ?

Ste. I left her on the beach

Following the 'parting ship with all her eyes !

I call'd to her—The sands on which she stood

Had ears as much as she !—She heard me not.

I turn'd to note if she were following me—

As well expect the sea !—It moved, but she

Stood still, in plight as sad, as barque that's driven

Upon a quicksand, settling fast, and sure

Never to come away !

Rob. Her mother's vein

Is in the girl !—So fond a wife was she,

That marriage, which with most is end of love,

With me was only the beginning on't !—

She had been early sent to school—remain'd there

Till she could teach where first she had been taught.

You see the girl she made my Marian !

She made me good, for she was goodness' self ;

Reclaim'd me from a wrecker, for a time ;

But evil habits, Stephen, like old sores,

Are seldom safe from breaking out again !

One night arose the cry "A ship on shore !"

I had been out carousing at a wedding—

The love of my old trade came strong upon me—

Down to the beach I flew, and fell to work ;

Unconscious that she follow'd ! Three whole hours

Remain'd she standing in the pelting storm !

I found her with the blood wash'd out of her,
 White as our cliff—cold, stiff, and motionless!
 My ill-got spoil I soon exchanged for her,
 Nor set her down till in our bed I laid her—
 But Heaven well knew she was too good for me;
 For from that bed she never rose again!

[*Turns from STEPHEN.*]

What of the ship?—Go to the door and see!

Ste. She's hull down.

Rob. Any other sail in sight?

Ste. Three to the westward.

Rob. Up or down channel?—which?

Ste. Up channel do they bear.

Rob. One of the three

May come ashore to-night.

Ste. The ship has changed

Her course!

Rob. The wind has changed!—'Tis right ahead!

She's on the larboard tack—Is it not so?

Ste. It is.

Rob. It looks thick weather round the ship,

Does n't it?

Ste. Yes.

Rob. And 'twill grow thicker! Storm
 Is in the air, though here 'tis sunshine still.

I feel it! It will blow great guns to-night!

The scud will gallop and the waves will leap!

A cloud has just come o'er the sun. What kind
 Of cloud?

Ste. A streaky one, and black and low,
 Stretching from east to west, and in its wake
 A fleet of others.

Rob. To be sure!—I know it,
 As well as you that see it.—Get my axe,
 Boat-hook, and grapple—Lay them here beside me.

[*STEPHEN goes out and returns with the things.*]

A storm is coming on from the south-east,
 Right from the sea—full on the shore! The ship

Is lost that keeps not a good offing, for

The sea, in such a wind as cometh on,

Rolls in like a spring tide, and surely sweeps

Into our bay the unwary barque, that hugs

This iron-bound inhospitable shore!

What offing keep the ships?

Ste. Two miles, the first,

And more.

Rob. She's safe. The second?

Ste. Scarce a mile.

Rob. She'll have her work to do, to clear the bay?

Behoves her to sail well upon a wind!

Lie high! be lively in her stays! The third?

Ste. Not half a mile. The first ship is about!

Rob. The wind has come to her! That's the new wind
I told you of!—the wind that brings the storm!
Will make the tackle sing! the bulkheads creak!
Try braces, shrowds and all! The very wind
For the wrecker! I could tell 't at one o'clock!

Ste. The second ship is now about.

Rob. She is?

Ste. And bearing from the land. The third ship—

Rob. Ay?

Well, what of her?—Is she about too?

Ste. No,

She misses stays! They ware her!

Rob. Is she deep?

Ste. She is.

Rob. Within the head?

Ste. Within the head.

Rob. How far?

Ste. A quarter of a mile.

Rob. A wreck!

Sure as she's now afloat!

Ste. Here's Marian.

Enter MARIAN, abstracted.

Rob. My Marian! My child! Her thoughts are still
Upon her lover's ship. How does my girl?

Mari. [Coming to herself, and running to ROBERT.]
Well, father, well!—What have you there? Your axe,
Boat-hook, and grapple! Ah!—a storm is coming!
You're for the shore again!—the heartless shore,
That spares nor ship nor shipman!

Rob. Did it lighten?

Ste. It did.

[ROBERT rises and takes up his wrecker's implements.

Mari. Stay, father, stay! Sit down again
And listen to me.

Rob. [Resuming his seat.] Well?

Mari. How canst thou bear
To strip the seaman, whom the winds may strip—
The waves—the rocks—which know not what they do;
But thou dost know, and ought'st to feel! To live
Upon the plunder of the elements!
The havoc of whose fury it should be
Thy labour to repair! The drowning man
Forgot, to get possession of the mite
For which he bides the perils of the sea!
And, if he sinks, is not his bubbling breath
That calls upon the friends he leaves behind—
A testament, more strong than pen can write,
To make assurance unto those he loves
Of aught the billows spare? Thy boat-hook drops—
Give me thy axe.

Ste. The storm is on! It thunders!

Mari. It is the voice of Heaven in anger!—calls
 On men for pity to each other—each
 Alike in peril placed!—Let go thy axe!
 Think of the axe that's lifted now above
 And falling fast!—might it not light on thee?
 Let go thy axe.—O the poor ship—poor crew!
 That hear the thunder which the ship hears not!
 O their poor wives! poor children! and poor friends!
 That pray this hour some help may be at hand!
 Hear me, my father! Have not you a child?
 Were you at sea!—were you within that ship!
 Give me your axe—and now that coil of rope—
 Your grapple—give it me!

Ste. A gun!

Rob. It is

The signal of distress.

Mari. Thy grapple, father!

Rob. I tell thee, Marian, not a soul can live
 In such a sea as boils within our bay.

Mari. And shouldst thou therefore strip the drowned man?
 O! at his death-bed, by the side of which
 No friend can stand, there is a solitude
 Which makes the grave itself society!—
 Helplessness, in comparison with which
 An ordinary death is kin to life!
 And silence, which the bosom could fill up
 With thoughts more aching, sad, and desolate
 Than ever utter'd wailing tongues of friends
 Collected round the bier of one beloved!—
 To rifle him! purloin his little stock
 Of gold, or jewels, or apparel!—take
 And use it as thine own!—thou!—thou! whom Heaven
 Permits to see the sun that's set to him;
 And treasure ten times dearer than the sun,
 Which he shall never see!—O touch it not!
 Or if thou touch it—drop it, and fall down
 Upon thy knees, at thought of what he was,
 And thou, through grace, art still!

Rob. Her mother's voice!

Her mother's words!—Here, take the coil!—Put by
 My boat-hook and my axe!—My Marian,
 I'll not go to the beach!

Mari. [*Having laid the things by.*] Heaven guard his ship!

Rob. Thy lover's?—Fear not! She has sea-room!—She's
 A bird upon the sea!

Mari. I am weary, father!

Rob. Go to thy bed—Thou art mind and body-worn!

Mari. I will! You'll mind!

Rob. I will, my Marian.

[*MARIAN goes out.*]

Ste. Another gun!

Rob. And nearer than the first!
 She's driving in apace!—Who pass'd the door?

Ste. Black Norris.

Rob. He will make a mint to-night!

Ste. She takes the ground!—Her masts are overboard!

[*Runs out.*]

Rob. Black Norris will not spare, and why should I?

The waves won't spare, and why should he or I?

Chests, bales will come ashore!—cordage and spars,

Hatchets will go to work!—No one will spare,

And why should I?—Not I!—I'll have my share!

[*Takes up the boat-hook, &c.*]

Mari. [*Rushing in.*] Father!

Rob. My child, go in!

Mari. Thou go'st not forth!

Rob. I must!

Mari. O father! 'tis unhallow'd work!

Rob. Go thou to rest!

Mari. And thou at work like that?

How wouldst thou sleep if I were doing wrong?

I will not let thee forth!

Rob. Come from the door!

Mari. Father!—when Heaven commands me shut the door?

Rob. Command who may, I'll open it!—Give way!

[*Forces her from it—she falls.* ROBERT and STEPHEN
go out.]

Mari. Father!—I'm stunn'd! He's gone! How could he
go!

O vice that's early planted!—Hard to weed it!

Plant virtue early!—Give the flower the chance

You suffer to the weed!—To hope success

Where my poor mother fail'd!—Heaven pity him!

Heaven pity him—and I, his child, on earth,

And not attempt to save him!—Father!—Father!—

[*Rushes out.*]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Vicinity of the Shore.*

Enter WOLF and NORRIS, meeting.

Nor. Wolf!

Wolf. Norris!

Nor. For the shore?

Wolf. Yes.

Nor. Whence I've come.

In my o'er-haste, what think you I forgot?

My wrecker's gear! I left them all behind?

My hatchet, boat-hook, grapple, e'en my knife!

[*Going.*]

Wolf. [*Stopping him.*] Tarry a while! Take breath! Your knife and axe,

Boat-hook and grapple, are not needed yet.
'Tis but the first of flood. Until the tide
Shall lift her o'er the outer bank, she'll hold
Together. Tarry here and look at her!
I have heard of fine sights; ay, and seen them too!

Now what's the finest sight a man can see?

Nor. The finest sight?—a ship that, caught in a bay
Like ours, ten miles and more from any town;
A black sky, a white water, and a shore
All iron-bound, and boiling round with breakers!
No sight like that for me! What tonnage is she?

Wolf. Four hundred and above. I know a ship,
And not so large a one, you had rather were
Aground than she.

Nor. I know the ship you mean:

She left the bay at noon. You're right! I hate
That ship! I hate her for the sake of one
She carries. Were my father in that ship,
I'd laugh to see her drown!—One whom they call
A good young man—only another name
For a limb of the devil! No young man can be good!
We are young, and know we not what we are?—Good!
What should make others better?—Better natures?
There's no such thing!—All mankind are the same;
Circumstance makes the difference. Circumstance
Is not the man! Had I that fair-skin'd girl,
Old Robert's daughter!—her of the dainty limb,
Round swelling form, and dimpled lady-cheek—
Had I that girl for messmate, or could have,
You'd see how soon I'd grow a good young man,—
Though devil at the bottom, still—as he!

Wolf. You fancy her.—Why not make up to her?

Nor. I told you, now, the sight which most I love.
Wouldst learn the sight which most I hate? Thou shalt.
The show of good, in man or woman,—but,
In woman most.—That's strange!—I hate the sight
Of a modest woman! 'Tis an eyesore to me!
I never look on one, but straight I fall
To gazing on myself! and then I writhe,
At thought of what I am, and what she seems;
Until I seem, unto myself, a beast!—
Yea, a brute beast!—and stand like one before her,
Gazing, and stupid,—dumb!

Wolf. 'Tis strange!

Nor. It is.

I have tried to court her—have accosted her,
But ever, as that lady-cheek of hers
She has turn'd to me, my speech has fail'd me, and
I've stood stock-still, confounded at myself;
And like a chid cur, slunk at last away!

Strange! that the only show of goodness should
So daunt a bold man, that he dares not do
The thing he dares to wish!

Wolf. You mean her fair?

Nor. I do! but e'en for fair ends cannot take
Fair means;—as smiling, speaking pretty things,
Pretty behaviour, creeping inch by inch!
I'd have her at a bound! That's not the way
She would be won. With opportunity
I'd woo her though.

Wolf. What do you mean?

Nor. No matter.

'Tis said they'll marry when this trip is done.
Now would old Robert take a sail, and leave
The girl alone, I'd promise him, that's gone
A merry wedding when his ship comes back.
How goes it on in the bay? She has moved methinks
Since last we look'd.

Wolf. She will not clear the bank
Before high water, or about it.

Nor. And

The storm you see holds on! A lovelier
Never yet broke a stranded vessel up!
And plenty on't! 'Twill last till midnight.—Black
As it can look, and right in the wind's eye!
Ay, steady that!—How slow the tide comes in,
And yet the wind to help it! O'er the bank
And on the rough ground, she'll not hold together
The quarter of an hour! I'll be prepared.
Tell them I'm coming! They'll be sure to give
A wide berth to the reef!

Wolf. I will.

Nor. Make haste! [*They go out severally.*]

SCENE II.—*The Sea-shore. Thunder, Lightning, and Wind.*

Enter MARIAN.

Mari. I cannot light on him, and not a soul
I pass'd but I have question'd!—Where is he?
My brain will burst!—a horrible oppression
Hangs on my heart, foreboding, sure, of ill!
Like what I felt, that day my mother died!
I hear—I see—
Things that I should not—Forms are flitting by me:
Voices are in mine ears, as if of things
That are—and yet I know are not!—Each step
I fear to tumble o'er the body of
Some drown'd man!—There's one!—A heap of weeds!
O what wild work do fear and fancy make!
Did some one cry?—Well?—What?—Where are you?—No!
'Tis nobody! What is't that still keeps up

This moaning in my ears, as if of words
 Utter'd in agony? 'Tis not the sea!
 'Tis not the wind!—I hear them both. 'Tis not
 The wreckers on the shore!—They utter nought
 But sounds of gladness. 'Tis not the ship!—She's out
 Of hearing. Am I growing mad?—What spot
 Is this I stand upon?—What brought me here?
 'Tis here they say a girl one time went mad,
 Seeing a murder done!—she was in quest
 Of her brother; and she saw a scuffle, and
 Approach'd the struggling men, just as the one
 Did cast the other down. Although 'twas night,
 She saw a knife gleam in the lifted hand
 Of the uppermost! She tried to call—so she said,
 When reason did at last return—but power
 Of utterance was gone. Thrice it descended,
 With a dull, griding sound;—and then, a voice,
 Which stabb'd her heart and brain, exclaim'd—"He's dead!"
 It was her brother's voice. 'Tis strange that fear
 Should be a thing almost as strong as death!
 Should shut the lips up—and deprive the limbs
 Of motion!—Yet have I a feeling how
 The thing may come to pass. The girl alone—
 The men upon the ground—one 'bove the other—
 The knife in his uplifted hand—it falls!
 I feel myself a sense of choking; and
 My feet do seem to cleave unto the ground.
 My tongue doth stiffen!—Ha!—[*Shrieks.*]—I have broke
 the spell!

I'm by myself!—Another minute,—not
 The girl more mad than I!—They are gone!—All gone!
 The earth, and air, so thick awhile ago,
 With things that neither earth nor air do own,
 Are empty now! Mine ears, and eyes, take note
 Of nothing but what is—the booming sea—
 The yelling wind—the rattling shingles, as
 The waves do roll them up and down again;
 And back my wand'ring thoughts return, to that
 Which brought me 'midst their uproar—to persuade
 My poor, misguided father to return
 And from his lawless work restrain his hands.
 I have traversed all the westward shore in vain,
 I'll search the eastward now.

[*Starts again at the same heap of weeds.*]

Not yet myself!—

'Tis the same heap of weeds I saw before! [*Goes out.*]

SCENE III.—*Another Part of the Shore.*

Enter ROBERT, *followed by* NORRIS.

Nor. Old Robert!—Hoa!—Stop!—Art afraid of me?

Rob. I never fear'd a man.

Nor. Why shun me then ?

Rob. I like thee not.

Nor. "Two of a trade!" Is't so ?

Well! I'm the luckiest wrecker of you all.
I cannot help it! Fortune bear the blame!
That has her favourites, as all men know
She has long made one of me! Is it right to hate
A man for his good luck ?

Rob. It isn't that.

Nor. It isn't that!—What else?—What can you say
Against me else? A splinter'd spar the waves
Do throw to you—a lockfast chest to me!
To me the breakers slue the captain in;
Mate—passenger from the Indies, West or East.
A foremast man to you—you know 'tis so,
And like the rest, do bear me envy; most
Unlike a man! But fortune ever turns
The evil you do wish me, into good.
I have no partner in my gains—what comes
To hand is all my own! "Afraid of me!"
I said it but in sport. I know you're not
Afraid of me, or any other man,
Or anything!—Have I not seen you leap
Into a boiling sea, to save a wretch
When his boat foundered! 'Twas a feat I doubt
If any other of the craft would do!
Wilt go, or tarry? Nay, there's time enough;
She holds together yet. There's lots of time.
What speed didst come when drove the last on shore?

Rob. Some coils of cordage; and a spar or two.

Nor. What then did fortune, think you, throw to me?

Rob. I cannot tell.

Nor. One hundred guineas, all
But one, lapp'd here and there, in various coin,
In the heavy vest and trowsers of a man—
I mean, a body—that was wash'd ashore.
Here's one of them.

Rob. A broad doubloon.

Nor. How much
Brought you your spars and cordage? How I laugh'd
To see you, heavy laden, toiling home
With a few crowns' worth, and I going light
With a good hundred guineas, all but one!
And you don't like me!—Why?—I'm a rough man;
And low'ring as they say!—but has all fruit
A fair outside? How ill-favour'd a one
A walnut has—a chestnut—cocoa-nut!
And yet how sweet within!—Yea there is milk
Within the cocoa-nut!—You never know
Some men by their outsides!—Prove them, and then
You'll know them. Here's another piece more broad,
And heavy than the first. Know you the coin?

Rob. No!—it is strange to me.

Nor. Examine it.

There's something now that I would be about;
Yet know not what it is!—Ne'er heed! The devil
Will prompt me when 'tis time!

[*Aside.*

Rob. I cannot tell
The coin.

Nor. Here; take a look at this.

Rob. Another!

Nor. Ay!—Will you believe me now?

Rob. Black Norris, you're
A lucky man!

Nor. "Black Norris!" Well!—it is
My nick-name. You may give it me—more black
May go by fairer name!

Rob. I meant no harm.

Nor. I know you didn't!—There's none! I tell you what—
There's not a man of all the crew, but one,
I do not hate. The best were first to peach,
When my old father, seven long years ago,
Did something which he could not do by law;
And was transported, for the lack of learning.
He didn't know 'twas wrong!—Well, as I said,
I hate them all, but one! and which is he?—
Yourself—I say no more!—Believe it, or
Believe it not!

Rob. Nay, rather I'd believe it.
I never thought before, you were so frank.

Nor. How could you think?—Grew samphire on yon cliff,
Who'd know't, if no one went to seek it there?
You keep aloof, and—strange!—you know me not!
You, none of you, consort with me, except
Young Wolf, another hang-dog, as they say.
He's a wrong'd man, and so am I—we are friends;
For common wrongs make friends of those that share them.

Rob. 'Tis natural.

Nor. 'Tis right!—as common fortunes,
So likewise doth a common vein, make friends,
My greatest enemy allows me brave!
I cared for thee no more than I did care
For any other of the churlish set;
But, when I saw thee venture thy own life,
With ten to one against thee, for that man,
I took a liking to thee!—That, you may
Believe, or not, as well as the other.

Rob. Nay,
But I believe it.

Nor. You can do no good
To me!—I have nothing to get by you!

Rob. Nothing!

Nor. Have I not? What a silly adage that
About old birds and chaff!

[*Aside.*

Rob. Here—here's thy gold.

Nor. Nay, keep it, an thou wilt.

Rob. Not so, good Norris.

Nor. A rare bird I, to turn from black to white ! [*Aside.*
Why, I believe you're right ; 'Tis doubtful gain,
To keep a thing that's not one's own ! The ship
Is now on the rough ground !—How fair she lies !—
Her broadside to the sea, that not a wave
But tells upon her !—What a cloud of surf
Keeps flying over her !—Look !—There's a sea !
'Twill take her right a-midships—Hurra !—Hurra !—
She has parted in the waist !—Old Robert, where
The use of words, when man can talk by deeds !
Yon reef you know is mine—they call it mine,
Because I make it mine—So far it runs
Into the bay, it makes a kind of eddy,
Whose swirl doth sweep all kinds of lumber in
That come within its reach—as prove my gains ;
'Tis thine to-day ! Go try thy luck upon it.
I'll help thee, if thou need'st—but not to touch
A stiver, though ten bodies should float in,
With pockets cramm'd with gold. There's something ! haste !
The waves do snatch as readily as give.
The tide is on the turn—the shore doth shelve
A foot in every nine !

Rob. I thank thee, Norris.

Nor. Off to the reef—Have cause, and thank me then !
[*ROBERT goes out hastily.*

It is a body that is wash'd ashore !
I'd know it at twice the distance. A fine torch
The lightning ! Rain will never put it out !
A body !—I begin to see it now.
Yes, it is done !

Wolf. [*Entering.*] Well, Norris !

Nor. All is well.

Run to the nearest group of wreckers,—say
You saw old Robert stooping o'er a body—
That you suspect foul play—and bring them to
The reef. He's there—but hold—not quite so fast ;
Let me have time to join him.—Go !—don't say
That I am there. Now, pretty Marian, [*WOLF goes out.*
Sure as thy lover is this hour at sea,
Thy father takes a trip, and follows him.
Bide there my tackle ! I had best go bare !

[*Puts his boat-hook, &c., behind a rock, and goes ext.*

SCENE IV. *The Shore close to the Sea.*

Enter ROBERT, dragging in a body.—MARIAN in the distance, slowly coming down a path cut out of the cliff—NORRIS behind a rock, from which he looks, occasionally.

Rob. The surge won't reach thee there ! I warrant me
No fear thou'lt go to it. Thy last—last draught,

In this world, hath it given thee—a cold,
Unwelcome one! Safe bide thou there! The waves
Are in a giving mood! I'd be at hand
To profit by their bounty. I did think
Some one was near me! Fancy!—How it lightens! [*Goes out.*]

Enter MARIAN.

Mari. The storm distracts me with its din! This roar,
This never-ending roar, which round and round,
The heavens keep up!—in which the surges join,
As though the thunder were not loud enough!
No sign, yet, of my father! What with fears
For him, and terror of the tempest, I'm
Bewilder'd! Let me try and look, above,
Beyond the clouds—beyond the stars! No storm
Is there! no wreck!—no raging sea!—no thunder!
But calm, and warmth, and brightness, as befits
The dwellings of the blest!—My mother's there!
O, my poor father! Here's the storm again!
Sea, thunder, lightning—all come back again!

Re-enter ROBERT.

Rob. I have lost my knife! Methinks I dropp'd it here!
[*Sees MARIAN.*]

What's that!—Is it a mortal thing? It makes
My spirit faint within me!—'Tis the form
Of my lost Marian!—Even so she stood
In the storm wherein her life was cast away!
Can she not lie in her grave for me?—Do my sins
Break on her last rest, there, and call her thence?
I sent her thither—on such nights as this
I have often look'd about me with a thought
That she was near me. There at last she is!
It is my Marian risen from her grave!
She comes to me!—O powers of grace, preserve me! [*Kneels.*]

Mari. The strength of Heaven!—To see it, yet not feel it!
Within its reach to do what it forbids!
And it in anger!—see the weapons of
Its wrath in motion—feel the earth shake at them!
And never pay it awe!—stand up to it!
Defy it!—'stead of falling on one's knees,
And asking it for mercy.

Rob. Mercy.

Mari. Ha!

My father!

Rob. Marian!

Mari. On thy knees!—That's right—
Fear not! Thou dost Heaven's bidding!—Do not rise
Until thou risest with its blesséd pardon!

Rob. [*Rising.*] What brought thee here, my child? Thou
ne'er before
Cam'st after me.

Mari. I came to look for thee ;
And to persuade thee to come home with me.
Thou tremblest—Thou art pale—as livid as
The lightning ! Dost thou hear ? 'Tis everywhere !
Not the clouds only, but the very air—
The very sea—the very earth—do thunder !
All—all is din and fire ! It is right
For man to tremble !

Rob. 'Tis not that !

Mari. What then ?

Rob. I took thee for thy mother, Marian !

Mari. Think me her still, and what she'd have thee do,
Do, by the love thou bearest to her, still !
Forswear this lawless life !—Thou wouldst not rob
A living man !—'Tis manlier to strip
The living, than the dead !

Rob. This night's the last !

Mari. This night !—O, no !—The last night be the last !
Who makes his mind up that a thing is wrong,
Yet says he'll do that thing for the last time,
Commences but anew a course of sin,
Of which that last sin is the leading one,
Which many another, and a worse, will follow !
At once begin ! How many, at this hour,
Alive as thou art, will not live to see
To-morrow's light !—If thou shouldst be cut off !
Should thy last sin be done, on thy last night !
Should Heaven avenge itself on that last sin
Thou dost repentingly !—my father, come !—
O ! a bad conscience, and a sudden death !
Come home !—Come home !—Come home !

Rob. I'll follow thee.

I'll fetch my boat-hook, and my other gear,
And follow thee.

Mari. I'll loiter till you come.

I'll rest upon yon rock, and wait for thee ;
For what with cares for thee, and terror of
The storm, I'm almost sped !

Enter NORRIS, cautiously.

Nor. Now is the time !—Now ! while her back's to me.
Is he dead ? There's warmth, methinks, about the heart,
More than there should be ! 'Tis no matter !—Cowards
May stick at trifles !—Can I find a stone
To knock him on the head ?—What's this ?—A knife !
'Tis Robert's !

Mari. [*Re-appearing and ascending the cliff.*] What's that
you are doing, father ?

Nor. She takes me for her father !—Good ! She'll see
What I do, and think it is her father does it,
And when 'tis done, so will I slink away.

She can't discover her mistake!—Now for it!

[He plunges the knife into the body—MARIAN utters a faint shriek, and falls senseless.]

She saw it! Marian's in my power! She's mine!

What next?—Quick work, and sure!—When he returns,

His daughter out of sight, he'll search the corpse;

Discover'd in the act, the nail is clinch'd!

But other witnesses are needed.—I

Were better out of sight. Wolf is at hand,

Nor yet alone. I'll speed to him and give him

His cue, and he and they will soon be here.

[Goes out.]

Rob. [Re-entering.] To leave it there!

And the last time! Where's Marian?—Out of sight!

The pockets may be full!—Why did I quit them

Unsearch'd, in greediness for other prey?—

Not now too late! I'm all alone!—A minute

Will serve to rifle them! I were a fool

To leave to others, what of right is mine!

[Goes to the body, and empties one pocket.]

What have we here? Some of the bright broad pieces

Black Norris show'd me! What a madness 'twere

To leave them in the pockets of the dead,

And let the living go with empty ones!

I'll count them by-and-by!—And this is full!

[Empties the other pocket.]

I'll ease it of its burthen!—Gold! All gold!

Whence comes that glare? Ha!—'Tis the beacon struck

By the lightning, and on fire!

Enter suddenly WOLF, AMBROSE, and others; led by NORRIS.

Amb. What do you there,

Rob. What do you there?

Rob. Nothing that I fear to do.

Amb. What hold you in your hand?

Rob. Gold!

Amb. Gold?

Rob. Ay, gold!

Wolf. Let's look at the body!—Ha!—What's here—A knife?

Rob. My knife!

Amb. Your knife? Why, Robert, it is sticking

In the dead man's breast!

Wolf. Pull out the knife!

Amb. 'Tis Robert's knife!—How came this, Robert?

See;—he cannot speak!

Phil. [Descending the cliff.] What's here?—A woman!—Is she dead?

[Lifts MARIAN.]

'Tis Marian!

She breathes! She's stunn'd; that's all! 'Tis well the ledge

Preserved her from the bottom! She must needs

Have miss'd her footing.

Wolf. Swoon'd, as likely, at
The sight of what her father did.

[*MARIAN, recovering consciousness, descends, supported by PHILIP, who brings her towards her father.*

Rob. [*Restored to collectedness at sight of his daughter.*] My
Marian!

Wolf. You see she swoons again.
The sight of him recalls the deed of blood!

Rob. My Marian!

Wolf. Hold him fast!

Help Norris, while he takes him to his hut;
I'll help you too!

Rob. My Marian!

Wolf. She swoons
Away again.

Rob. Let me go, friends!—I'm innocent! For the love
Of Heaven, don't drag me from my child! I'm innocent!
Marian! My Marian! My Marian!
I'm an old man, lads! Use me gently! No!
Don't drag me from my child!—I'm innocent!
My Marian! My Marian! My Marian!

[*They force ROBERT away, leaving MARIAN supported by PHILIP.*

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The inside of a Hut.*

ROBERT discovered pacing to and fro.

Rob. A murderer!—What—I, that sicken at
The sight of blood, to do the deed of blood!
A murderer!—and with a hand as free
From blood as an infant's!—To be tried for it!
Condemn'd, perhaps, and executed!—I!—
That never did it!—Then my branded name,
That don't deserve the brand—and, worse than all,
To leave it to my child—my Marian!
My fair young girl!—good!—good!—whom Heaven sent
To save her father; but he would not heed her—
Turn'd a deaf ear unto an angel's lips,
To listen to that devil, the greed of pelf!
That was my crime, indeed—but only that.
Some one has circumvented me, but who?
Black Norris? Him or Wolf I sore suspect—
But what's suspicion only?—Not a thread
To bind a man with!

Enter NORRIS.

Nor. Robert!

Rob. Is it you,
Black Norris?

Nor. Yes, 'tis I—Black Norris, as
You call me—come to cheer you.

Rob. Well, Black Norris?

Nor. I don't believe you did that murder.

Rob. No?

Nor. Some one has got the better of you—laid
A trap for you, and caught you—who—Heaven knows!

I say, I don't believe you guilty, but

Appearances are all against you—caught

Stripping the body, with the gold in your hand,

And your knife sticking in the dead man's breast!—

Rob. Who stuck it there?

Nor. Why, how should I tell?

Rob. [*Catching hold of NORRIS.*] Nay,
Who stuck it there?

Nor. Not I,

Nor any one I know!—Take off thy hands,

Old man!—I did not come to wrestle with thee;

Wish'd I a game like that, I'd tackle to

With tougher sinews!—For another end

I came—to tell thee 'tis my turn to watch,

And hast thou goods to run, the coast is clear—

Now, grip me by the throat.

Rob. Forgive me, Norris.

Nor. Forgive thee!—Fiddlesticks!—Offend me first,

Then ask me to forgive thee! Here is gold

For that they took away from thee.—Away!

Make straight for the east coast!—Take shipping there,

And where thou settlest, advertise me!—Go!—

Rob. [*Going, stops short.*] My child! I had forgot her—Seek
her! Seek

And bring her to me! I can't fly from death

Without my child!—I can't forsake my child!

Nor. Forsake thy child!—A stranger, now, to her

Availeth more than thou. What are the dead

Unto the living?—Nothing!—Not the worth

Of a wheaten straw—That helps to make a light!

You can make nothing of the dead!—If you thirst—

Hunger—go naked—suffer anything;

You may for them! There's help in a live mouse

More than a dead man!—and what else art thou?

Accused of that, the man that doeth which

The law condemns to die. Escape the law—

And then talk of thy Marian.

Rob. No more;

Thou madden'st me!

Nor. I tell thee what thou know'st

Must be!—And, sooth to say, though a rough man,
 I've no desire to see thee die the death!
 Who meets it bravest, but puts on a mask
 Which only proves the agony 'twould hide,
 When at the hangman's touch, the sweat-drop starts
 On the bold brow, so seeming calm; and the blood
 Flies to the heart, and leaves the valiant cheek,
 That would be thought to smile, without a drop
 To vouch for it!

Rob. Thou harrow'st me, good Norris.

Nor. Yet what I tell, thou know'st! What must it be,
 When a reprieve, at the last point, has kill'd!
 I knew a man who narrowly escaped.
 To think of what he told me, even now
 Makes me breathe thick, and from my crown to my sole
 Sets my flesh tingling; and all o'er my skin
 Spreads the chill, clammy, heavy dew of death!—
 What at the sight of the huge, living mass
 Of human faces, all upturn'd, he felt
 As would a living man, suppose he lay
 Beside a corpse—for such, he said, he seem'd
 To be unto himself. How he began to freeze,
 To freeze at the heat of the sun, with thought of the grave!

How life

Stared on him, yea, from lifeless things around him!
 Fields, houses, walls, stones—yea, the grisly frame
 He stood on, his last footing-place in the world!
 And he living a spectacle of death!

The process then—

Rob. Leave off!—I choke!—I fly!—
 The door is fast!

Nor. Thy fear hath shot the bolt!—
 You see 'tis open!

Rob. [*Taking his handkerchief from his neck.*] Give my
 Marian this,

And be a friend to her!

Nor. I will.

Rob. My child!

Nor. Soon as the seas are cross'd, what hinders her
 Take ship, and follow thee?

Rob. Thou'lt see to that?

Nor. I will.

Rob. My blessing on thee, Norris!

Nor. Nay!—

Rob. Thou'rt the preserver of my life—and all
 That makes it life to me! As thou to me
 Art kind, may Heaven prove kind to thee! Thy face
 Why dost thou turn away?

Nor. I do not like
 That any see me weep!—I had as lief
 Be hang'd as thank'd! My watch is nearly spent,
 A quarter of an hour; and 'tis the span

In which thy coil of life doth lie. Make haste!
 Why dost thou stand bewilder'd thus? Look, Robert!
 There is the door!—A minute more 'tis lock'd!
 Choose on which side on't thou wilt then be found.

Rob. I take thy proffer—Norris!

Nor. If thou breathest
 Another word of thanks!—

Rob. I won't!—You'll not
 Forget my child?—You'll be a father to her?
 Swear thou wilt be a father to my child!

Nor. You note my hand is on the key!

Rob. Don't turn it!
 I am gone!—I fly!—My Marian!—My Marian! [*Rushes out.*]

Nor. My Marian!—An open window. Ay!

Now a fast door. Who's there?

Wolf [*outside*]. 'Tis I.

Nor. What, Wolf?

Enter WOLF.

Come in! He's off!—he's fled!—Art sorry, man?
 I'm not much prone to pity; yet had as lief
 A man that's innocent should escape as die.

Wolf. That's innocent!

Nor. Thou fool! Hast known me still
 Thy master in all kinds of craftiness,
 Could buy and sell thee, and believest thou yet
 He murder'd him?

Wolf. Who did it then?

Nor. By my troth,
 Thou hast no stomach for a deed of blood!
 Thy own seems spill'd at only thought of one!
 'Sdeath! Is't a frost, man, that thy cheek's so white,
 And that thou shiver'st so? "Who did it then?"
 No one! There's fire to warm thee! Be thyself!

Wolf. The knife was taken from his breast.

Nor. It was!—
 What ails thy teeth to make them chatter so?
 Want'st meat, or drink, or sleep, or what? "The knife
 Was taken from his breast!" What then? The knife
 Found nothing there it could not find within
 A six weeks' buried corpse! Furies and death!
 Believest me not?—or takest me for a ghost,
 Still gazing on me thus, with mouth agape?
 Listen! Whilst he was gone to fetch his gear,
 Which he had left behind him on the reef,
 Soon as it served to draw the body in,
 I, who was all along upon the watch,
 Stole to the body, thereupon to leave
 Some mark of violence,—such as prates of hands,
 Found the wreck'd seaman, dead. [*WOLF shakes his head.*] I
 tell thee, dead!

'Sdeath ! won't believe me still ? Searching for something
To serve my purpose—lo ! my hand by chance
Lit on his knife, he had dropp'd—on Robert's knife !—
When didst thou get the ague ? What a fit !—
I say by chance I lit on Robert's knife,
For which this hand of mine—not Robert's, as
Thou thought'st—Thou dog-fish ! How I laugh at thee !—
Gave it the sheath wherein thou saw'st it sticking.
Why, thou wilt shake thee out of joint ! What heeds
A dead man's breast a knife, more than a pincushion
A pin !

Wolf. [*Stammering.*] The body !

Nor. What of it ?

Is it tied to thee ? Art in the death-grip of
The drownéd man ? I would not think thee, Wolf,
A chicken heart, yet never saw I man
That look'd more like a coward ! Couldst thou see
Thyself and look at me ! What of the body ?
Did it rise up, and walk, or run, or caper,
Or offer thee a hand to shake, or talk,
Or troll a song to thee ? What did the body
To make thee marvel like a man demented ?
Tell me, that I may play the madman too !

Wolf. Pray Heaven thou go'st not mad in earnest !

Nor. Man !

Wolf !—Have a care !—Don't take me for a child,
Because thyself art one ! Thou wouldst not say
That life was in the body ?—It was warm
About the heart ! [*Aside.*]—Sit down, good Wolf, sit down ;
Recover thee a little. Tell thy tale
Thy own way. For I see there's something—come—
Go on—the body ?

Wolf. I return'd to it

When thou and all the rest were gone, to search
If yet a coin or two remain'd. 'Twas bleeding !
I thought it strange, for not a drop I saw,
Follow'd, when out the knife I drew ; and I fancied
Life must be in it still—and so it was !
I felt the heart beat slow and dull—mine own
Methought would stop !

Nor. Kept the blood flowing still ?

Wolf. It did—more free ; and as it flow'd, the heart
Began more free to beat.

Nor. It had been wrong
To stop the blood.

Wolf. I didn't !—I only watch'd

The heart, the beat of which grew stronger still,
Until methought the chest began to heave ;
And so it did !—and, presently, I heard
A gurgling in the throat of the shipwreck'd man,
And I began to freeze, expecting now
To hear the body speak.

Nor. Did it?

Wolf. Almost!

A sound between a murmur and a moan.

Nor. Was it repeated?

Wolf. Yes; but very faint.

Nor. Any more?

Wolf. Yes; fainter though, at every time;

And now the heart beat faint, and presently

Came a slight shivering o'er the body—then

A sigh—and nothing more—the soul had fled!

Nor. I thought 'twas over warm about the heart!

Wolf. O Norris, say it not!

Nor. What did I say?

Wolf. You thought 'twas over warm about the heart.

Nor. Well!—Of what value is a spark of life,

More than a spark of any other thing?

Wolf. The body was thy father's!

Nor. Devil!—Imp

Of Hell! Unsay it, or thou diest, with

A lie in thy throat!

Wolf. Were it my last breath, Norris,

I speak the truth!

Nor. Who else has heard it from thee?

Wolf. No one!

Nor. I am mad!—No wonder if I am!

Wretch, hadst thou stopp'd the old man's blood—

Wolf. He had lived!

I thought thy interest 'twas, that he should die.

I knew not then it was thy father.

Nor. Devil!

Why had I anything to say to thee!

And where's the body now?

Wolf. I left it where

I found it.

Nor. Fool!—Thou shouldst have carried it

To the cliff, and cast it straight into the sea,

Where ne'er the sand is dry.

Wolf. Would not the sea

Have thrown it up again?

Nor. The sea?—The earth,

Though it were buried in't ten fathom deep,

Would throw it up again!—Nothing can make

A grave that's deep enough to keep it!—Cast

A mountain on't, 'twould heave it off!—They'll know it

When it is brought before the coroner!

Wolf. I have taken care of that.

Nor. Mangled the features?

Wolf. Yes!

Nor. Savage!—

Wolf. For thy sake I did it!

Nor. True!

Right!—You did very right—and after all

What was it but a piece of clay?—Now, Wolf,
Where wouldst thou be?

Wolf. Why, anywhere, but here!

Nor. Wilt cross the sea?—Thou hadst a hand, thou knowest,
In the murder—Thou didst finish it—Thou lett'st
The old man die—he were not murder'd, else—
Wilt cross the sea?—I'll give thee gold enough
To pay thy passage wheresoe'er thou'lt go,
And set thee down there, as a man,—and more,
If more thou want'st—Wilt cross the sea?

Wolf. I will.

Nor. When wilt thou start?—To-morrow?

Wolf. Yes.

Nor. At dawn?

Wolf. At dawn!

Nor. That's good!—That's excellent!—I'm much
Beholden to thee, Wolf—Thou'rt a true friend—
Go far—Go very far!—The wider berth
The better! Stop not at a thousand miles—
Or two—or three!—Look, Wolf! I have a jar
Buried in the garden, full of treasure—Take it,
And luck go with you!—You will start to-morrow?
At dawn?—Take passage to a distant land,
Will you not!—Thank you! Thank you, Wolf! I'll ne'er
Forget you!—never cease to be your friend! [They go out.

SCENE II.—*The inside of Robert's Cottage.*

Enter MARIAN.

Mari. My father's house!—O would it were, indeed,
My father's house, as I knew it!—once!
I were content to be a wrecker's child!
But now I have a feeling as I were
The loathing of the roof that gave me birth!
The threshold, which from childhood, out and in
I have pass'd—and O how oft in blithest mood!
Seem'd as it said to me I had no right
To cross it now—my room would shut me out!
The very bed I've slept in every night
For eighteen years, appear'd to say to me,
"Lie on the floor!"—and when in agony
I threw myself upon the floor, I shrank,
As that would spurn me too, and cry to me,
"Thou art the daughter of a murderer!"—
Me, that when household use required the life
Of a poor brainless bird, would run a mile
To get some other hand to take it; nor
Could even then look on!—But where is nature?
She has been scared away, but now returns.—
O my poor father!—O my luckless father!

My hapless, guilty father!—Will the day
Never more break?—I only wait for it
To seek for him, and comfort him, and tell him
That I am still his child—his Marian!

Rob. [*Rushing in.*] My Marian!—What! Hold'st thou back
from me?

Mari. No.

Rob. But thou dost!

Mari. No!—No!—See there—I have thrown
My arms around thy neck!

Rob. Yes!—but you turn
Your head away!

Mari. Is't turn'd away now?

Rob. No!

But where's the kiss, you never met me but
You printed on my cheek?—

Mari. There!

Rob. Humph!—I fear

I have thrown away both time and risk—I came
To seek my daughter—but she is not here!—
She has gone from me!—deserted me!—I have lost her!

Mari. No!—No!—

Rob. You know her?—fetch me her!—make haste!

Mari. She's here!

Rob. She's not!—She's anywhere but here!

And I am here at peril of my life,
To see her for a minute ere I go
Perhaps for ever from her.

Mari. Oh! my father!

I am indeed thy child!—Thy Marian!

Rob. These tears are something like her—I begin
To think that thou'rt my child—Thou art my child!
Thou hast heard it?

Mari. Yes!

Rob. What ponderous thing is "Yes,"
To take a sigh like that to heave it off?

Mari. Thou art in danger.

Rob. Great!—To-morrow, may be,
A dungeon! there, most certainly the dock!—
There, in all likelihood, the gibbet! but
I have a chance—that chance is now!—'Tis little!
And, every moment that I lose, grows less!
But I'm content it should go all!—ay, all!
If I have lost one fraction of my child
That's due to me—go all—and let it go!

Mari. I am all thy own—Thy own hand not thy own
More than thy Marian!—Thou'rt in flight!—We'll fly
Together!

Rob. [*Re-assured.*] No, but thou shalt follow me,
And speedily!—Think kindly of Black Norris!—
He set me free—He'll be a friend to thee—
He furnish'd me with means of flight.

Mari. With means ?

[*MARIAN goes out, and returns with a little purse.*
Here, father, here !

Rob. Part of thy little store ?

Mari. The rest 's at sea. To have it with me, now,
Though it might grow to millions where 'tis gone,
I'd miss the mighty gain !

Rob. And thou, my child ?—

Mari. I have hands !—There's Heaven !—O father !

Rob. Dost thou think
Thy father guilty ?

Mari. I think nothing, now ;
Except that thou'rt in danger.

Rob. Marian,
I no more did the deed—

Mari. They will be here,
And then thou art lost !

Rob. Thou dost not think me guilty ?

Mari. What matter what thy Marian thinks, when death
Pursues thee and thou lingerest here, and not
One moment am I certain but the next

It may o'ertake thee—here !—in thy own house !

That's now no shelter for thee—here !—before

Thy Marian's eyes, that cannot help thee !—Fly !

Thy life perhaps may pay for the next breath

Thou drawest here !—The thought distracts me !—Fly !

Rob. It cannot be thou think'st me guilty ?

Mari. Fly !

Terror will take away my senses—Fly !

Rob. I do begin to doubt thou think'st me guilty ?

Mari. O father, fly !

Rob. I am innocent !

Mari. 'Tis well !

Rob. It is not well—I am innocent ! I'll swear it !

Mari. Thou need'st not, father—Don't !—Fly !—Fly !—

Rob. By—

[*Raising his hand towards heaven.*

Mari. Stop !

[*Preventing him.*

Rob. Thou think'st me guilty !—Spare thy kindness—There
Perish thy coin ! I will not use it !—fly !

Do anything to save my life !—If it goes,

It may go !—Here I'll sit !—E'en here !—Ay here !—

Here in the cottage thou wast born in, nursed,

Brought up in—till thou'rt eighteen years, and now

Tell'st thine own father he's a murderer !

Here I'll wait for them—Let them come and take me !

Take me before thine eyes !—imprison me !

Try me, and hang me ! I'll not turn my hand

To save my life ! Since my own child, that knows me,

Believes me guilty. I am guilty !—Yes !

Let all the world beside believe me so.

Amb. [*without*]. What ho !

Rob. They come !

Mari. Fly by the other door! [Knocking at that door.]

Rob. You hear? It is beset!

Mari. Hide somewhere!

Rob. Where?

They'll search the house!—Were there a hundred doors

And all were free—were there a cavern, where

No foot could follow me—I would sit here

And let them take me!

Amb. Robert!

Rob. [Opens the door.] Here!—Come in!

[AMBROSE and others enter.]

Mari. For mercy's sake!—

Rob. For no sake!—Here I am:

Take me!

Mari. My father!

Rob. I am guilty!

Mari. Nay!—

Rob. She says I am—take me away!

Mari. O! stay!

Don't take him yet!—Good friends!—You are neighbours!—
Don't!

Don't take away my father!—Leave him with me!—

Pray—Pray don't take him!

Rob. I am guilty—Take me!

I am guilty!—Ask my child—my Marian!

Mari. Don't!—Don't!—Stay! Mercy! Mercy!—O my
father! [They go out.]

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—A Waiting-room.

Enter AMBROSE and PHILIP.

Amb. He is committed, and I pity him!

To be condemn'd upon the evidence

Of his own daughter! 'Tis unnatural

To take away the life that gave us ours!

This comes of learning!—Had it been a child

Of yours, or mine, what heed would she have taken

Of a false oath, to save her father's life?

Her mother was a sort of lady—ay,

The daughter of a broken gentleman;

Took up his quarters in the cottage, while

Old Robert's father lived. They fell in love,

And at the father's death, they married.

Phil. So

Fair Marian's lady breeding.

Amb. Even so
 She, as her mother used before, it seems,
 Still quarrels with the freedom that we take
 With dead men's gear; and to the beach must needs
 Follow her father—She had better far
 Have sought her death, for what a curse must life!
 Be to her now! Was it not strange she fainted
 Soon as her evidence was done, and yet
 Could give that evidence!

Phil. Here comes old Robert.

Enter ROBERT between two constables, followed by men and women.—NORRIS in the back-ground.

Rob. I am innocent! I am murder'd! My own child
 Has sworn my life away! My Marian!
 Falsely—most falsely!—When they try me, 'tis
 By her I die; not by the judge—the jury,
 Or any one but her! She gives the verdict!
 Passes the sentence!—puts my limbs in irons!
 Casts me into my dungeon!—drags me thence
 To the scaffold!—is my executioner!
 Does all that puts her father in his grave
 Before his time!—Her father, good to her,
 Whate'er he was to others—Oh! to have died
 By any evidence but mine own child's!
 Take me to prison.

First Constable. We are waiting for
 The order of committal.

Mari. [*Rushing in.*] O my father!

Rob. Thy father?—Am I so?—I prithee, girl,
 Call me that name again! It is a thing
 Too strange to be believed!

Mari. What, father?

Rob. What?

Why, to be father to so good a child!

Mari. So good a child?

Rob. So good a child! I say it

Again!—So good a child!—Come, look at me!

Give me thy hand!—the other one, and look

Full in my face!—And fix thine eyes on mine!—

As I do live, thou canst!—And yet canst lie

To call me father!—Thou'rt no child of mine!

He turns her from him, she falls on her knees.

Mari. My father!

Rob. Up! or I will trample on thee!

Fasten my hands in thy dark silken hair,

And lift thee up by it, and fling thee from me!

Who gave thee those fine locks?

Mari. Thou!—Thou!

Rob. Who gave thee

Those hands thou clasp'st to me?

Mari. Thou!

Rob. I!—Indeed!

And the rest of thy limbs?—Thy body? and the tongue—
That murder'd me—Owest everything to me?

Mari. I do!—indeed I do!

Rob. Indeed! Indeed!

Thou liest!—Thou wast never child of mine!
No!—No!—I never carried thee up and down
The beach in my arms, many and many a day,
To strengthen thee, when thou wast sickly!—No!
I never brought thee from the market-town,
Whene'er I went to it, a pocket-load
Of children's gear!—No!—No!—I never was
Your playfellow that ne'er fell out with you,
Whate'er you did to him!—No!—Never! Nor
When fever came into the village, and
Fix'd its fell gripe on you, I never watch'd
Ten days and nights running, beside your bed,
Living, I know not how, for sleep I took not,
And hardly food! And since your mother died—

Mari. Thou'lt kill me, father!

Rob. Since your mother died,
I have not been a mother and a father
Both—both to thee!

Mari. Oh! spare me!

Rob. I was never
Anything to thee!—Call me father!—why
A father's life is wrapp'd up in his child!
Was mine wrapp'd up in thee?—Thou know'st 'twas not!—
How durst thou call me father?—fasten upon me!—
That never gave thee proof, sign, anything
Of recognition that thou wast my child!
Strain'd thee to my heart by the hour!—parting thy hair
And smoothing it, and calling thee all things
That fondness, idolizing, thinks upon
To speak its yearning love!—core of my heart!
I never was a father to thee, so
Don't call me father! Thou'rt no child of mine!

Mari. I am!—I am!—Don't say I'm not thy child!
The child to whom thou didst all this and more.

Rob. Thou stood'st not then, just now, in the witness-box,
Before the justice in that justice-room,
And swore'st my life away.

Mari. Where thou dost say,
I stood!—What thou dost say, I did!—and yet,
Not in those hours thou name'st of fond endearment,
Felt, as I felt it then, thou wast my father!

Rob. Well!—Justify it—Prove thee in the right—
Make it a lawful thing—a natural thing—
The act of a child!—a good child—a true child!
An only one!—one parent in the grave,
The other left—that other, a fond father—
A fond, old, doating, idolizing father!

Approve it such an act, in such a child,
To slay that father! Come!

Mari. An oath!—an oath!

Rob. Thy father's life!

Mari. Thy daughter's soul!

Rob. 'Twere well

Thy lips had then a little of the thing
The heart had over much of!

Mari. What?

Rob. Stone!—Rock!

They never should have open'd!

Mari. Silence had

Condemn'd thee equally.

Rob. But not the breath

Mine own life gave!

Mari. I felt in the justice-room

As if the final judgment-day were come,

And not a hiding-place my heart could find

To screen a thought or wish; but every one

Stood naked 'fore the judge, as, now, my face

Stands before you! I could not, in his presence,

Deny the thing he knew—the thing he knew;

Was also known to me! I could not take,

And in his face, his holy name in vain!

Nor could I hold my peace; a stronger will

Than mine, than yours, than all the world's, compell'd

My lips to open!—I lost thought, that moment,

Of everything—friends, lover, father, all!—

I nothing saw but that all-seeing eye

Bent searchingly on mine—though now I see

Nothing but my father!

[She rushes towards him, and throws her arms round his neck.]

Rob. Hold off!—thou adder!

Sting me, and think to coil about me still

With thy loathsome folds! Think I will suffer thee!

Not grasp thee!—pluck thee from me!—dash thee to

The earth!

Mari. Oh! no!

Rob. Unloose thy coil!—my flesh

Creeps at the touch of thee! Let go thy hold,

Or I will do some violence to thee!

Mari. Do!

Rob. Strike thee!

Mari. Do!—Dead!—Dead!—'Twere merciful.

Rob. No: suffer thee to live, that thou mayst see
My execution.

Mari. Is it thy child

Thou speakest to!

Rob. Let go, or I will curse thee!

Mari. Do! so thou sufferest me to cling to thee.

You cannot think I swore it with my will!

That I—thy child—thy Marian—all my life
 Good to thee—was I not?—and loving thee!—
 Did I not?—O you cannot think that I,
 Who would suffer torture—death—ten thousand deaths,
 To save thy life—would swear thy life away
 Willingly? willingly?—Oh! in my heavy strait—
 To be an instrument of justice 'gainst thee—
 That makes me wish—and I *do* wish it—thou
 Hadst never given me being!—bear not thus
 Unsufterably hard upon thy child!—
 Thy child as ever! Whatsoe'er she did!
 Whatsoever thou hast done!—That loves thee—dotes
 Upon thee! honours!—idolizes thee,
 As e'er did child her father!

Rob. Let me go!

Or sure as I'm a living murder'd man—
 Murder'd by thee;—I'll curse thee!—let me go!—

Third Bailiff enters with a paper, which he gives to the First Bailiff.

Third Bailiff. The order of committal!

Mari. [*To Bailiff.*] Stop!—a minute!

Rob. Or loose thy hold, or bide my curse!

Mari. My mother!

That is in her grave—who gave me to thee—gave me,
 When she had bless'd me on her death-bed, saying,
 "Be mother, now, and father to our child!"—
 For her sake, father! Am I not by her
 Enough an orphan!—would I, think you, would I
 Be more an orphan than I am?

Rob. Away!

Mari. Both—both my parents lose?

Rob. May—

Mari. [*Shrieks.*] Don't curse me—but I cannot let thee
 go!— [*They go out, MARIAN clinging to her father.*]

Norris. [*Coming forward.*] Hold on, old Robert!
 That's the mood! Hold on!
 Rail at her! Spurn her! Curse her! Drive her mad!
 The more she's fit for me. Use thy own flesh
 Like carrion! Foot it from thee! Loathe it! I'm
 The bird will banquet on't!—A father's blood
 Must not be shed—although unwittingly—
 For nothing!—That's the price which I have paid
 For her dark hair, white skin, and shapely limbs;
 Her lady face and fairly rounded form!
 And I will have them;—nor do I prize them less
 Because her heart would give them to another!
 That is the feast of hate, to taste the joy
 That's purchased at the cost of those we loathe!
 And, now, to end the game successfully,
 The close of which I pant for more and more,
 The nearer that it draws! She must be mine!

'Tis well I kept aloof. I risk no blame
 For not disclosing what I was not ask'd
 To tell. And what my tale? *I saw old Robert*
Dragging the body in. Well, what comes next?
I saw him leave it; and, to put a trick
Upon the old man, just in sport, although
I'll own 'twas somewhat devilish in me, took
Occasion of his absence, found his knife,
And, knowing that the man was dead—stone dead—
Stuck it, and left it where they saw it. This
 I'll swear, and who can contradict me? Wolf
 Is far away! Thus, that he lives or dies
 Depends on me—on Marian, the choice
 To save or sacrifice her father's life.
 One only bar remains—her love for Edward,
 And that I've taken care to manage—spread
 Report his vessel foundered in that storm,
 And he and all went down. I managed this
 In the village where I skulk'd. 'Twill soon be here,
 And then for Marian. Madden'd as she is—
 Her lover fancied drown'd, her father's life
 In jeopardy; she's certain to consent.
 Then, my confession, when the prison doors
 Will open to him, and Marian's arms to me!

Enter STEPHEN.

Whither so fast, good Stephen?

Ste. Where is my master?

Nor. Fast in prison!

Ste. Where

His daughter?

Nor. Thou hast news,—and it is bad!

Ste. It is!—Young Edward's ship is cast away

Upon the coast of France, and all the crew,

'Tis said, have perish'd!

Nor. Know'st thou what thou say'st?

Ste. As thou that hear'st me say it!

Nor. All the crew?

Ste. All!

Nor. And thou art in search of Marian

To tell her this?

Ste. I am!

Nor. I'll bring thee to her.

Stephen, I wonder at thy news!—The news

Which I myself have spread! [*Aside.*] I'll bring thee to her.

[*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*The Outside of a Prison.*

MARIAN *before the gate, half-reclining on the ground.*

Mar. Here is my death-bed. Here I'll stretch myself

And die! I feel it! I am sure
 I am about to die. I could have borne
 The shame of the misdeed that was not mine—
 Submitted to it, as the will of Heaven,
 Incurring which I had not broke its will—
 But that the tie of nature should have snapp'd
 Along with that of reverence for Heaven—
 That where I found all love—all safeguard, once—
 I find all loathing—all desertion now!—
 That is too hard to bear! No kind of shame
 That ever made the cheek to redden, while
 The heart was free, had made me shrink from him—
 I would have cleaved to him amid the lightnings
 Of blasting looks, and voices, thundering scorns!—
 Shared the dark penance of his dungeon with him!
 Walk'd with him to the place of execution!
 Mounted it, step by step, along with him!
 And, all around him lowering, shone upon him
 Till his last look, with reverence and love!
 They shall not shut me from his prison!—Have
 No right! I am his child! They should not heed
 His anger 'gainst me which they do not share,
 But I must bear alone! How high soe'er
 The surf doth run! They shall not keep me out!
 Within! within!—Who minds the gate?

Enter Jailer.

Jailer. What want you?

Mari. Admittance to my father!

Jailer. 'Tis forbid!

Mari. Open the door a little.—Do, good sir,
 And let me speak with you—give me but a chink,
 I'll pass through it! [*Aside.*]

[*Jailer opens the gate, she tries to pass it, but is prevented. They advance struggling.*]

Jailer. What mean you? Are you mad?

Mari. I am! The fury all, without the trance
 That makes it bearable! The horror of
 The dream, without the sleep! Do you know aught
 About the ties of nature? Have you look'd
 Upon a living father, mother, brother,
 Or sister—or upon a living child
 That was your own? I have a living father,
 And he's within that prison—and I am here
 His living child, and yearn to go to him!
 And you say I cannot! Can you say it? Will you?
 Do you? You do not! Cannot! Will not! Oh,
 Admit me to my father!

Jailer. What's the use?

He'll only drive thee from him!

Mari. Let me in,

I'll find the use! Oh! do you think his heart

Could turn to stone, in a moment? Harden so
To the very core, and 'gainst his only child?
Admit me, and you'll see it still is flesh;
All flesh—all beating flesh, and at the core,
Its inmost—tenderest—warmest part—his child!

Jailer. Poor girl!

Mari. You pity me!—Oh! show me pity then—
The act it prompts!—without which, spite of all
Its melting looks and tones, its sighs and tears,
'Tis useless as a very beggar, who
Gives all things but the needed thing—relief!
You say “Poor girl!”—and you say true! To be
An orphan!—to be friendless!—shelterless!
To go in rags, and they in tatters! Hang
From morn till morn—from week's end unto week's end,
'Twixt sustenance and starvation!—all of these,
Together, but a little sprinkling make
Of suffering, to the torrent hurl'd on me!
I can't stand under it much longer.—Now!
My reason totters!—reels! Another moment
I'm a lunatic—O save me from the jacket,
The straw—the whip—the chain—open the door!
Admit me to my father!

Jailer. It is hard

To have no option but the act of duty,
When the heart bleeds, and duty fain must let it.
Poor girl! Though I consort with stone and iron,
My heart partakes not, so, of their condition,
That I can see and hear thee with such eyes
And ears, as walls and bars on misery turn!
Thou must endure—and Heaven support thee under it!
All are denied admittance to his cell,
And thou, I grieve to say it, chief of all!

[*Going.*

Mari. [*Stopping him.*] Stay! Let me stop at the door of
his cell!—at the end.

Of the passage that leads to it!—in the court on which
The passage opens!—on the stairs!—anywhere
Within the prison!—so that I may be
Under one roof with him! Let me stop with you
At the gate!

Jailer. It may not be.

Mari. Show me the window of
His cell!—Is it that?—or that?—which is it?

Jailer. Neither.

Mari. Is it that then?

Jailer. 'Tis not in this quarter of
The prison.

Mari. Which quarter, then?

Jailer. I may not tell thee.

Don't stop me, girl! I can't stay longer with thee!
Thou quite unmann'st me!

Mari. Leave the door ajar—

A moment ! Let me look into the prison ! [*He shuts the door.*
 Go !—Thou dost weep indeed !—but 'tis pretence.
 Thou art no better than the grating bolt
 That at thy will is shot, and holds the door !
 I am helpless—hopeless !—Would I were the bolt,
 Door—walls—bars—anything but what I am !
 And I have put him there ;—and if he dies,
 I hang him ! Who are these that look at me,
 As they would strike me dead ? I couldn't help it !
 My mother train'd me in the fear of God !
 I was forced to do it ! Just as well might ye blame
 A rock to split, when riven by the lightning,
 As my lips to part, when in the name of Heaven
 The justice bade them ope and speak the truth !
 I am innocent !—don't spurn me—I am innocent !
 [*Retreats to the wall, and supports herself against it.*

Enter NORRIS and STEPHEN.

Nor. There !—Up to her !—Accost her !—Tell your news !
 What ! is it loathing that I feel for her,
 Not love ? It pleasures me to see her thus !
 Except for her I had not done it ! That
 Is rankling at my heart—sets it in storm !
 I'm all for havoc ! He should die—but then
 It were another murder on my soul !
 And I should lose the prize I've paid so much for !
Ste. Marian !

Mari. Well, Stephen ! What of misery more ?
 For sure it is your errand, by your looks !
 Tell me ! You can add nothing to the cup
 Already that o'erflows ! Is it of Edward ?
 Is he dead ?

Ste. He is ! Drown'd on the coast of France.

Mari. I hear it—and I do not shed a tear !
 Nor feel the *want* to weep ! I welcome it !
 'Tis good news ! He has left a world of woe
 To him—to him—for what is woe to me,
 Were woe to him ! Would I a heart I love,
 As I love his, should feel the blight mine feels ?
 Would I put adders where I could not bear
 To have an insect sting ? 'Tis well he's dead !
 The friends he leaves, should put on holiday,
 Not mourning clothes for him ! His passing bell
 Should ring a peal, and not a knell ! 'Tis best
 It is as it is. His welcome home had been
 "Heaven help you !"—not "Heaven bless you !"—Well, he's
 dead !

How was he drown'd ?

Ste. His ship, they say, went down
 With all the crew.

Mari. With all the crew ! He lies
 In a watery grave ! How fresh he look'd the day

He went! What hope was in his eye, whose fire
 You would have thought would ne'er go out? He seem'd
 In speed to meet good fortune as a friend
 Already come in sight!—I see him now
 Stepping with gallant air into the boat,
 And looking at the sea, as 'twere a thing
 Stable as the solid earth!—My sailor lad!
 Young, comely, manly, good, and fond of me!
 I little thought the look would be my last
 Which promised I should see thee soon again.
 Thou diest in good time—'Tis years of woes
 Saved by a minute's pang! I thought just now
 I was past weeping! I *did* love him!—love him
 With all my will!—no portion of my heart
 But what was given to him—no portion on't
 I ever wish'd were back!

Nor. Now is my time!

Marian!

Mari. What! more?—Is there more misery?
 There's nothing left but death—I do not count
 Death misery!

Nor. I come to talk to thee
 Of life, not death!

Mari. Where is it?—show it me!
 Life is the opposite of death—a thing
 To be preferr'd to it!—show me *that* life!—
 For if thou mean'st such life as now I see,
 I had rather die than live!

Nor. I love thee, Marian!

Mari. Does any one love Marian?

Nor. I repeat

I love thee, Marian, wilt thou marry me?

Mari. Marry thee?—Yes; when they put on for me
 My wedding clothes—my shroud!—and lay me in
 My bridal bed—my grave!—Then I'll be wife
 To thee or any one!

Nor. What wouldst thou do
 To save thy father's life?

Mari. Anything!

Nor. What

To have it proved that he is innocent?

Mari. Anything!—pay the felon's penalty
 Myself!—Abide the gibbet!—Marry thee
 Now!—now!—If now thou couldst heave off for me
 That mountain on my heart—my father's plight!
 That, heavier on my soul—my father's sin!
 This didst thou do—and stood my lover there,
 Of whom to say, that, in his grave, he's dearer
 Than he was, ever, when in life to me,
 Is to say truth—I'd give to thee my hand!

Nor. I take it!—

What! draw'st thou back?

Mari. 'Tis but to pause a moment !
 No !—I'll see nothing but my father !—Think
 There's no one else in the world !—I'll see but him
 And the plight he lies in !—deeper—lonelier
 Than shipman at the bottom of the sea !
 Canst thou do this thou sayest ?

Nor. Yes !

Mari. Thou'lt save
 My father's life ? Thou'lt prove him innocent ?

Nor. I will !

Mari. The day thou dost it, I am thine !

Nor. Give me thy hand upon it !—Draw'st thy hand back
 Again !

Mari. No !—There !—One moment !—Edward !—There !

[*Faints in his arms*]

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Shore.*

Enter NORRIS.

I stare at my good fortune ! Things that seem'd
 To bar my wishes, help them ! First the stop,
 Was put to Robert's flight ; then his committal—
That was the most perverse ; but now he's free.
 My frank confession oped the dungeon-door,
 At cost alone of smart reproof to me,
 For what his worship call'd a wicked trick.
 And now fair Marian, with her own consent,
 Is mine ! This very day we go to church !
 I would it were to any other place !
 I dream'd of her last night. I thought it was
 Our wedding day, and, to the church-door, I
 Was leading her. 'Twas shut ! I knock'd at it.
 One answer'd from within, "I must not enter !"
 Whereat I shudder'd, for I knew the voice.
 And yet again I knock'd. When oped the door,
 And, fear-congealing sight ! a spectre glared
 Upon me ! 'Twas my father !—and he said,
 "It is forbid—thou must not enter here !"
 I woke. It was the first night I had slept—
 To call it sleep—since that unlucky night.
 Oh ! may I never sleep such sleep again !

[*Goes out.*]

SCENE II.—*Robert's Cottage.*

Enter ROBERT.

Rob. Better I had died ! My child has given her life

To cherish mine! E'en while I look at her,
 I see her wasting!—and what aggravates
 The pang to watch her fall a prey to death
 So fast, is the sweet uncomplaining patience
 With which she bears the tooth that's gnawing her,
 Working its way into the quick! She looks
 On me the cause of the inextricable,
 Unsufferable strait she has fallen into,
 As one to pity rather than to blame!
 This is her wedding day!—far better call'd
 Her funeral day! I have left no means untried
 To tempt him to forego his claim—he cries
 "I've paid the price, and what I've bought I'll take!"

While prayers awaken wrath, and not remorse,
 And his eye lowers till I think I see
 His heart laid bare, with evil at the core.
 The hour!—I must awaken her. Her eyes
 Were closed when last I look'd!—before the time
 I would not have them open on the day
 They'll see at last too soon!—she has waked of herself!
 Is up, and dress'd, and smiling with a cheek
 More kin to death than life!—My Marian!

Mari. [*Having entered.*] My father!—what's the matter that
 you turn

Your eyes away? You falter when you speak!
 Father! be cheerful—happy—look upon me!

Rob. My girl, don't smile!

Mari. What my face does, my father,
 My heart does!—It is calm!—Yea, cheerful!—not
 That it lacks cause for grief—but has more cause
 For gladness! I have done what Heaven approves—
 My duty!—sacrificed a little thing—
 Much in itself, but in comparison
 Little—to gain a great thing—to preserve
 My father's life!—I should smile!—Let me smile,
 And smile along with me!

Rob. My child—my child—
 That talk'd to me like an angel!—clung to me!
 Knelt to me to persuade me to forbear!
 And, like a fiend, I would not heed, but did
 The evil thing, whence all this ruin grew!
 My child, who loving me, as she truly said,
 And since has proved, beyond her life—preserved
 Her reverence for Heaven, when, lacking that,
 She might have saved me!—My poor child, that I
 For doing so her duty, as she ought,
 Thrust from me—used with violence—yea, suffer'd
 To trail along the street, hanging to me!—
 Whom I was nigh to curse!—I did not, Marian!
 Indeed I did not curse thee!—A child so used!—
 To blast her happiness—life—everything,
 For me—and do it with a smile!

Mari. My father!

No more of this, beseech thee—These are thoughts
That cannot profit us! and they awaken

Others, 'twere better for our peace we suffer'd

To sleep!—for they may madden!—Give me thy hand!

Don't speak!—My brain reel'd round just now!—

'Tis over!—Father, go to the door and see

If he be coming.

Rob. Who?

Mari. The bridegroom, father.

Since we're to marry, as well marry now

As any other time—O save me!—Hide me!—

[*Rushing to her father, hides her face in his breast.*]

Enter EDWARD.

Edw. My Marian!—My girl!—My love!—My bride!

And is thy joy to see me back so great

It overcomes thee?—Marian, from the hour

We hoisted sail to bring me back to thee,

The wind has never veer'd nor flagg'd.—We've had

A merry run of good twelve knots an hour!—

Nothing—sheet, halyard—but the helm to 'tend to,

As though the vessel with my heart were racing,

That kept before it still!—O turn to me!—

Look at me!—Speak to me!—The face and voice,

I have heard and seen a thousand miles away—

Now that I'm near thee—within reach of thee—

Touching thee, Marian!—let me see and hear!

Has she not power to speak or move?

Rob. My boy,—

The sight of thee, so sudden, overcomes her.

Edw. And does she love me better?—Marian!—

Sweet—constant—fond—could I believe so fond?—

'Twas never thus with thee before at meeting!

Unloose the hands that clasp thy father's neck—

Or let me do it for thee—till I fold thee

To my fond, faithful—my adoring heart,

That yearns to feel thee near it!—Marian!

Know'st thou not Edward's hand?—Does she resist me?

Is it not joy that works upon her so?

Does my return give pain?—Is it a thing

Unwelcome?—Am I loved no longer by her?

Am I forgotten?—

Mari. Edward—no!—no!—no!

Thou'rt not forgotten.

Edw. No?—nor loved no longer?

Mari. Nor loved no longer?—loved more dear than ever!—

Than ever, Edward!

Edw. Marian!—My love!

My life!—the ship is on her course again!

Steady! There's nought ahead!—Fool that I was

To fancy breakers!—Come, my faithful girl!

Sit on my knee and talk to me! 'Tis long
 Since we have talk'd together, Marian!
 Dost thou hold off? I have been so long away,
 You are ashamed to sit upon my knee.
 Well! There! What you like I like! Though you've sat
 Often upon my knee. Well! I have made
 My luckiest voyage!—our pence have grown to pounds!

Mari. We heard that you were shipwreck'd!

Edw. Ay!

Mari. Were drown'd!

Edw. You took me for my ghost!—no wonder, girl,
 You ran away from me! O now I see!
 We've not touch'd ground we did not wish to touch!—
 Nor shipp'd a sea since first we hoisted sail!
 And now we marry, Marian!—What's the matter?
 How ill you look?—What's this?—You shrink from me!
 Has she been ailing, father?—Where are her eyes?—
 I left her with a rose upon her cheek,
 Where is it?—That is not the form I clasp'd
 A month ago!—What's fallen? Something! Ay!
 Something! What is it?—Both are silent!—Then
 Something I know has fallen! To look at you
 Is enough—enough!—'twill drive me mad!—I am mad!
 Tell me the truth!—Nay then I'll seek for it
 Where I'm more like to find it.

Mari. Stop! Come back!—

No!—Stay!—Forgive me, Edward! [*Falling on her knees.*]

Edw. Marian!

Forgive thee!—Why? For what?

Mari. Don't ask!—To sea!

On shipboard, and set sail, whate'er the wind,—
 Anything, Edward, but the shore!—To sea!—
 Rocks, breakers, sands, are nothing!—all the perils
 Of leaks, dismasting, canvas blown to threads,
 Are nothing!—Foundering!—The dismall'st plight,
 That ever barque was in, are nothing!—Yea
 Drowning, with thoughts of going deeper down
 Than ever plummet sounded, or of graves
 Made of the throats of sea-monsters, that dog
 The fated vessel!—Leap into them sooner
 Than trust thy feet on land!—To sea!—to sea!

Edw. What mean you?

Mari. I will tell while I can!

Edw. Rise up then, and don't kneel to me!

Mari. Forgive me!

Edw. For what?

Mari. Ay, that's the thing, you can't forgive me
 Until you know for what, and when you know it,
 Will you forgive me then?—You will not! Yet,
 Were it my last breath that I speak with to thee,
 I love thee dear as ever!—dearer!—dearer!
 I love thee dearer than I ever did!—

Edw. Then where's the harm?

Mari. Where?—everywhere!—The sun
Has turn'd to ice!—There is a haze in the sky,
Chilly and thick, that ne'er will clear away!
The earth is wither'd grass, leaves, flowers, and all!
Women and men are changed, all cheer and comfort
Departed from their faces and their tongues,
To me!—for thou that madest all these to me
Art lost!—

Edw. Am I not faithful to thee still?

Mari. Thou art, and I am faithful still to thee!
But!—

Edw. What?

Mari. Oh, father!

Rob. Well thou mayst reproach me!

Mari. No!—no! I don't reproach thee; tell it him—
Stop! he will know it soon enough—He's here!

Enter NORRIS and others, dressed as for a Wedding.

Nor. Marian!—What! Edward living!—Edward here!

Edw. It dawns upon me! Dawns?—'Tis open day!—
A stormy one, the sky all black, the sea
All foam, all things portending shipwreck! shipwreck!
Already come! binnacle wash'd away!
Rudder unshipp'd! not a mast standing! nothing
But the hull! the lonesome, melancholy hull!
With mountains breaking over it!—She's changed!
She's false! she's lost! I live, and she is lost!

Nor. Come!

Edw. Will she go to him before my face?
She will!—She does!—Will she go forth with him?
Go forth with him to church, and leave me here?
She's gone!—Come death! Well! I'm ashore again—
That which I long'd for every hour in the day!
Every minute!—Pray'd for! dreamt upon! lived upon!—
More than on food or drink, with hope to get it,
I have got at last!—I am on shore again!
Better be at the bottom of the sea!
What's to be done?—Can anything be done?—
My destiny's too hard to bear, and yet
I must bear it!—To be mad! O to be mad!—
How can my senses stand it?—What are they made of?
Why don't they go to pieces?—Not one plank
Holding by another! All toss'd here and there
In splinters!—Splinters!—Come, there's comfort in
The knowledge of the cause that wreck'd the ship.
That I will force from her, and then I'll leave her—
Leave everything!—Leave her, leave everything! [*Goes out.*]

SCENE THE LAST.—*The outside of a Church.*

Enter Clergyman, NORRIS, MARIAN, ROBERT, and others.

Clergyman. These nuptials are not things of lucky omen.

Nor. I pay no heed to omens!

Clergyman. Marriage is

A holiday—a day of gladness, though

We drop a tear in't!—Bright looks are its favours!

Lightness of gait, and ease of carriage, are

Its proper dress!—This maid has none of them!

Nor. She weds of her free will

Clergyman. You are the bridegroom?

Nor. There stands her father—question him!

Clergyman. Methinks

You look not like a bridegroom; no, nor speak!

There's sullenness upon your brow and tongue,

Care at the heart's core, if not something worse!

His marriage-day is still the merriest

A lover keeps: It is his harvest-home,

When blights, and winds, and autumn floods are 'scaped,

And all the venture of his tillage housed.

With song and dance and thankful merry-making.

'Tis strange! but it is your affair, not mine.

You are her father!—Gives the maid her hand

Of her free will?

Rob. She does; against her choice,

She gives her hand, although it breaks her heart!

Your Reverence must have heard, he holds her promise

His price for service render'd unto me,

By which her hand she gives, disjoining it

From her heart, long given to another. Tears,

Entreaties, prayers, all means I have tried, to shake

His stubborn purposes, and to pity bend him—

All thrown away! Yet have resolves the strongest

Given way, at last; perhaps the hour, the place,

'Thy sacred presence, these perhaps may give

A sway to that was powerless before!

Look on me, Norris! I'm a father; see

To what a strait I'm brought, upon my knees

Before thee in the dust! Turn to my child—

Upon her death-bed could she look more white?

More ghastly, more like death? She loves thee not!

To save her father—a father less to her

Than she a child to him—she's in the plight

That brings her hither! If she marries thee,

It is not with her heart! Don't take her hand!

Take that, thou takest her life along with it!

'Thou lay'st a corpse upon thy bridal bed,

And not a bride! O, spare her! spare my child!

Spare me in her!—thyself! forego thy claim!

Release her from the word she will not break,
 Though keeping it her thread of life will snap!
 Release her from it!—Give a young girl her life!—
 Preserve the remnant of an old man's life!
 And make thyself, if not a happy man,
 At least a man contented with himself;
 Who else, must needs become a verier wretch,
 Than any that he makes!—

Nor. I am here to wed!—

Clergyman. Stern man, look here!—thine eyes may serve the place

Of ears, no need of them to learn the case
 Of that poor supplicant! What hast thou heard
 Of misery that e'er came up to that?
 Plead tears as strong, as she without them plead?
 Sighs? groans?—all things that serve as tongues to grief?
 She looks despair, beyond what e'er was told
 By doleful sound! Art thou a man, or what?
 What keeps thee rock, when all around thee melt?
 Shake! fall to pieces at the spectacle
 Which most ought thee to move? Hast thou no touch
 Of Earth or Heaven, which all men have beside?
 So to contrast with all? Thou livest and breathest—
 By Him thou livest and breathest by, I adjure thee
 Forego the hand which He forbids thee take!

Nor. I am the bridegroom, there's the bride; she weds
 Of her free will; though hearts go not with hands,
 No reason why they may not follow them.
 I love her—I will have her—and I take her!

Edw. [*Rushing in.*] Angel! I know it all! I thought before,
 I could not love thee better than I did,
 But now I love thee more than e'er I did!
 Self-sacrificed to save thy father's life!
 The fairest barque that ever mounted wave,
 From duty, run upon the foulest shore!
 Art thou a man! [*to NORRIS.*]—O reverend sir, to proof,
 Without the church, let me his manhood put,
 And see if in my frame that fibre lives,
 So basely weak, 'twill yield, till at my feet
 His claim upon the maiden he renounce!
 It is not reverence to Heaven, to stand
 And see it outraged in the thing it loves,
 Through reverence to Heaven's servant or Heaven's house!
 Norris, come forth;—

Nor. Yes! when I lead, a wife,
 Thy Marian from the church.

Edw. She is not mine!—
 I do forego the maid, do thou forego
 Her hand! If hate for me—loathing to see
 The maiden mine—constrains thee to an act
 To which a murder were a gentle deed,

I give her up ! Pluck up my hopes, although
 Their roots have struck to my heart's core, and cast
 Away that they shall never flower again,
 But wither, die, and rot !—Oh, give her up,
 And take whate'er by years of toil I've made !
 If that sufficeth not, take me along
 To labour for thy gain to my life's end !
 To do thy bidding, whatsoe'er it be,
 On land or sea—how far soe'er away !
 To be thy journeyman will labour through
 The four-and-twenty hours, without repose
 Or food, and set to work when they are out—
 Only give up the maid, her word—her peace—
 Her patience—reason—life !

Clergyman. No violence !—Or is her reason gone,
 Or she is in a trance !

Mari. 'Tis coming !—

Nor. What ?

Clergyman. Peace !

Mari. How it scowls all around ! The sea is black
 As the sky ! From head to head as black as ink !
 There comes the wind ! You see !—that streak of white
 Along the horizon !—it grows larger !—See !—
 And larger !—That's the wind ! 'Tis coming on,
 Pacing the waves, and stirring up the spray,
 As horses do the dust when they're in speed !
 You hear it now !—and now the sea is white
 As it was black before !

Rob. Something like this
 Occurr'd last night, but I aroused her, and
 Recall'd her to herself.

Nor. This is no time
 For list'ning to a dream !

Clergyman. Speak'st thou again !
 I'll make them put thee from the church by force !
 I'll hear the dream out, if it be a dream !
 If that her senses are unsettled, you're
 Forbid to take her hand !—I charge you, peace !

Mari. It lightens ! but—'tis distant !—And it thunders—
 Only you cannot hear it !—for the sea
 That, now, begins to roar ! You'll hear it, though,
 Anon !—'Tis coming, listen ! Hold your breath—
 Don't speak ! I heard a gun !—There 'tis
 Again ! And there's the ship, rounding the head,
 Rising and pitching, and no pity takes
 The storm upon her ; but more furious waxes—
 And billow after billow, fore-top high,
 Breaks over her ! She strikes ! She's fast ! She's lost !
 And now the waves do with her what they will !
 She's gone to pieces !—Pieces !—What is this ?
 A body wash'd on shore, and Norris there,

Rifling it! Ha! he stops!—He is alarm'd!
 He sees that life is in it! What is that
 He does? He has unclasp'd a knife! He means
 To murder the poor man!—He will!—He does!
 Stop! Norris!—'tis thy father!

Nor. Furies! fiends!

What mean you?

Clergyman. What mean *you*? The blood is gone
 Even from thy very lips! while all beside
 Look as they look'd before! Thou'rt a bad man!

Nor. What heeds a raving girl?

Mari. Where have I been?—

The church? Oh! I remember!—All is right!—
 Here, Norris, take my hand!

*[They approach the altar—WOLF rises—NORRIS lets
 go MARIAN'S hand, and retreats several paces—the
 rest pause.]*

Nor. Hell! what is here?

Like something from a grave, or from the sea
 Cast up untimely and unnaturally;
 Or, worse, a prisoner from the evil place,
 If such there be, let out to harrow me
 Before my time—affright me into madness!

Edw. Speak not!—Observe!

Nor. Wolf!—Wolf!—It is his eyes—
 Features—but not the life that moved in them—
 His form without his blood! Is it a thing
 That breathes, or only would be thought to breathe?
 Wolf! I would rush upon it, but my fears
 Are bolts that pin me to the spot! Is it come
 To tell upon me? Cause of blame to him
 I gave not; he went cramm'd with gold away!

Edw. *[To Clergyman.]* Do you hear? That man has been
 a partner with him
 In some black deed!

Wolf. I have fled over sea, over land,
 To get away from it! It follows me!
 I have plunged into riot—I have tried
 What solitude would do! It talks to me!
 I see it in the dead of night as well
 As in the noon of day. 'Tis only here
 I have got a respite from it yet! In crowds
 I have been alone, with it glaring upon me,
 Gnashing its teeth, and yelling in mine ears!
 But there's another here that comes between
 With mild regards, and placid shining face,
 And gentle voice, which makes, albeit so soft,
 My torturers unheard, crying "Repent!
 Confess! Repent! Confess!"

Nor. Confess!

Wolf. I will

Repent, I will confess!—then am I free!

I am a murderer.

Nor. Be thou the fiend—I'll know thee!

[*Rushing up and seizing him.*]

Wolf!

Wolf. Norris!—What, has it been following thee?

Nor. Peace!

Wolf. [*Furiously.*] But there is no peace! It howls, and howls,

No foot is fleet enough to distance it,
To 'scape the horror of its teeth;—the bloodhound,

No stream that you can wade will clear thee from,

That never gives you respite!—except here!

Here is a chance! This is a place methinks

He cannot enter; he has hunted me

Till he has driven me wild, but since I'm here,

His bay methinks begins to die away.

Words have been whisper'd me, at hearing which

'Twas told me he would slacken in his chase.

"Repent! Confess!" Those were the words I heard.

I will!—I do!—I am a murderer.

Nor. Coward, where is my gold?

Wolf. All clotted o'er,

Corroded, crumbled with the old man's blood,
Which thou lett'st out, and I did leave to spill—

Nor. Fiend!

Wolf. Do not rave at me! I did not know

It was your father!

Edw. Hear ye?

Nor. Villain!—die!

With a lie in thy throat!

[*Stabs WOLF.*]

Clergyman. Stop, wretch!

Wolf. Thou hast murder'd me!

And but for thee I had not murder'd him!

But in my soul's strait on the brink of death,

I'll show thee pity as I hope to me

That mercy will be shown!—"Repent! Confess!"

I hear not now the hound!—nor wilt thou hear it,

If there be mercy for a parricide!

[*Dies.*]

Nor. You would not listen to a lunatic!

Clergyman. At least, unhappy! thou'rt a murderer!

Nor. Which of you would not kill a mad dog? Come!

You have no right to hold me! Show me first

Your warrant, without which you cannot take

A man that's free to prison!—Just as well

Hang me without a trial!—Let me breathe!

Give me a moment's pause!—Let my arms free!

Oh, could I use them now! The blackest curse

That lips can utter—heart conceive—alight

On all who enter there!—May the roof fall

And bury you alive—may it be in flames!

And every door and window fast upon you!
 My blood lie at your doors!—the best among ye
 Is worse than I! My blood be on you all!

[He is dragged out.]

Clergyman. Poor sinner! Grace is broad and free enough
 Even to cover thee, didst thou repent—
 Pattern of love, and piety, and duty,
 Surely in Heaven thou wouldst have been rewarded?
 But Heaven defers its guerdon for thee there,
 To give thee one on earth! Be blest in love!

END OF VOLUME I.

THE LOVE-CHASE.

A Comedy.

DEDICATED

TO DANIEL GRANT, ESQ.

OF MANCHESTER,

BY HIS ATTACHED AND GRATEFUL SERVANT,

J. S. KNOWLES.

1837.

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT THE HAYMARKET, IN 1837.)

<i>Sir William Fondlove</i> , an old Baronet	..	Mr. STRICKLAND.
<i>Waller</i>	in love with Lydia,	Mr. ELTON.
<i>Wildrake</i>	a Sportsman	Mr. WEBSTER.
<i>Truworth</i>	{ a Friend of Sir William..... }	Mr. HEMMINGS.
<i>Neville</i>	{ Friends to Wal-	{ Mr. WORRELL.
<i>Humphreys</i>	{ ler	{ Mr. HUTCHINGS.
<i>Lash</i>		Mr. ROSS.
<i>Chargewell</i>	a Landlord	Mr. EDWARDS.
<i>George</i>	a Waiter	Mr. BISHOP.
<i>First Lawyer</i>		Mr. RAY.
<i>Widow Green</i>		Mrs. GLOVER.
<i>Constance</i>	{ Daughter to Sir William Fondlove	{ Mrs. NISBETT.
<i>Lydia</i>	{ Lady's Maid to Widow Green }	{ Miss VANDENHOFF.
<i>Alice</i>	{ Housekeeper to Master Waller }	{ Mrs. TAYLEURE.
<i>Phæbe</i>	Maid to Constance,	Miss WRIGHTEN.
<i>Amelia</i>		Miss GALLOT.
<i>First Lady</i>		Mrs. GALLOT.

SCENE—LONDON.

THE LOVE-CHASE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Lobby of an Inn.*

Enter CHARGEWELL, hurriedly.

Charg. What, ho! there! Ho! sirrahs! More wine! Are the knaves asleep? Let not our guests cool, or we shall starve the till! Good waiting, more than viands and wine, makes the good inn!—George!—Richard!—Ralph!—Where are you?

Enter GEORGE.

George. Here am I, sir!

Charg. Have they taken in more wine to that company?

George. Yes, sir.

Charg. That's right. Serve them as quick as they order! A fair company! I have seen them here, before. Take care they come again. A choice company! That Master Waller, I hear, is a fine spirit—leads the town. Pay him much duty. A deep purse, and ready strings.

George. And there is another, sir;—a capital gentleman, though from the country. A gentleman most learned in dogs and horses! Huntsman and whipper-in, together, were scarce a match for him!—one Master Wildrake. I wish you could hear him, sir.

Charg. Well, well!—attend to them. Let them not cool o'er the liquor, or their calls will grow slack. Keep feeding the fire while it blazes, and the blaze will continue. Look to it well!

George. I will, sir.

Charg. And be careful, above all, that you please Master Waller. He is a guest worth pleasing. He is a true gentleman.—Free order, quick pay!

George. And such, I'll dare be sworn, is the other. A man of mighty stores of knowledge—most learned in dogs and horses! Never was I so edified by the discourse of mortal man.

[They go out severally.]

SCENE II.—*A Room.*

MASTER WALLER, MASTER WILDRAKE, MASTER TRUEWORTH, MASTER NEVILLE, and MASTER HUMPHREYS, *sitting round a table.*

Wal. Well, Master Wildrake, speak you of the chase! To hear you, one bestrides the bounding steed;

You bring the hounds and game, and all to view—
 All scudding to the jovial huntsman's cheer!
 And yet I pity the poor crownéd deer,
 And always fancy 'tis by fortune's spite,
 That lordly head of his, he bears so high—
 Like Virtue, stately in calamity,
 And hunted by the human, worldly hound—
 Is made to fly before the pack, that straight
 Burst into song at prospect of his death.
 You say their cry is harmony; and yet
 The chorus scarce is music to my ear,
 When I bethink me what it sounds to his;
 Nor deem I sweet the note that rings the knell
 Of the once merry forester!

Nev. The same things
 Please us or pain, according to the thought
 We take of them. Some smile at their own death,
 Which most men shrink from, as a beast of prey
 It kills to look upon. But you, who take
 Such pity of the deer, whence follows it
 You hunt more costly game?—the comely maid,
 To wit, that waits on buxom Widow Green?

Hum. The comely maid!—Such term not half the sum
 Of her rich beauty gives! Were rule to go
 By loveliness, I know not in the court,
 Or city, lady might not fitly serve
 That lady serving-maid!

True. Come! your defence?
 Why show you ruth where there's least argument,
 Deny it where there's most? You will not plead?
 Oh, Master Waller, where we wish to hunt,
 We think the sport no crime!

Hum. I give you joy,
 You prosper in your chase.

Wal. Not so! The maid
 In simple honesty I must pronounce
 A miracle of virtue, well as beauty.

Nev. And well do I believe you, Master Waller;
 Those know I who have ventured gift and promise
 But for a minute of her ear—the boon
 Of a poor dozen words spoke through a chink—
 And come off bootless; save the haughty scorn
 That cast their bounties back to them again.

True. That warrants her what Master Waller speaks her.
 Is she so very fair?

Nev. Yes, Master Truworth;
 And I believe indeed as virtuous, too.
 But chasteest maid will list to freest suit,
 If Master Waller pleads it. On pretence
 Of sneaking kindness for gay Widow Green,
 He visits her, for sake of her fair maid;
 To whom a glance, or word, avails to hint

His proper errand; and—as glimpses only
 Beget and whet desire to see the whole—
 Awakens interest to hear the tale
 So stintingly that's told. I know his practice—
 Luck to you, Master Waller! If you win,
 You merit it, who take the way to win!

Wal. Good, Master Neville!

True. I should laugh to see
 The poacher snared!—the maid, for mistress sought,
 Turn out a wife.

Nev. How say you, Master Waller?
 Things quite as strange have fallen!

Wal. Impossible!

True. Impossible! Most possible of things—
 If thou'rt in love! Where merit lies itself,
 What matters it to want the name, which, weigh'd,
 Is not the worth of so much breath as it takes
 To utter it! If, but from Nature's hand,
 She is all you could expect of gentle blood,
 Face, form, mien, speech; with these, what to belong
 To lady more behoves—thoughts delicate,
 Affections generous, and modesty—
 Perfectionating, brightening crown of all!—
 If she hath these—true titles to thy heart—
 What does she lack that's title to thy hand?
 The name of lady, which is none of these,
 But may belong without? Thou mightst do worse
 Than marry her. Thou wouldst, undoing her,
 Yea, by my mother's name, a shameful act,
 Most shamefully perform'd!

Wal. [*Starting up and drawing.*] Sir!

Nev. [*and the others, interposing.*] Gentlemen!

True. All's right! Sit down!—I will not draw again.
 A word with you: If—as a man—thou say'st,
 Upon thy honour, I have spoken wrong,
 I'll ask thy pardon!—though I never hold
 Communion with thee more!

Wal. [*After a pause, putting up his sword.*] My sword is
 sheathed?

Wilt let me take thy hand?

True. 'Tis thine, good sir,
 And faster than before—A fault confess'd,
 Is a new virtue added to a man!

Yet let me own some blame was mine. A truth
 May be too harshly told—but 'tis a theme
 I am tender on—I had a sister, sir,—

You understand me!—'Twas my happiness
 To own her once—I would forget her now!—
 I have forgotten!—I know not if she lives!—
 Things of such strain as we were speaking of,
 Spite of myself, remind me of her!—So!—

Nev. Sit down! Let's have more wine.

Wild. Not so, good sirs.
Partaking of your hospitality,
I have overlook'd good friends I came to visit,
And who have late become sojourners here—
Old country friends and neighbours, and with whom
I e'en take up my quarters. Master Truworth,
Bear witness for me.

True. It is even so.

Sir William Fondlove and his charming daughter.

Wild. Ay, neighbour Constance. Charming, docs he say?
Yes, neighbour Constance is a charming girl
To those that do not know her. If she plies me
As hard as was her custom in the country,
I should not wonder though, this very day,
I seek the home I quitted for a month! [*Aside.*
Good even, gentlemen.

Hum. Nay, if you go,
We all break up, and sally forth together.

Wal. Be it so—Your hand again, good Master Truworth!
I am sorry that I pain'd you.

True. It is yours, sir.

[*They go out.*

SCENE III.—*Sir William Fondlove's House.—A Room.*

Enter SIR WILLIAM FONDLOVE.

Sir Wil. At sixty-two, to be in leading-strings,
Is an old child—and with a daughter, too!
Her mother held me ne'er in check so strait
As she. I must not go but where she likes,
Nor see but whom she likes, do anything
But what she likes!—A slut, bare twenty-one!
Nor minces she commands!—A brigadier
More coolly could not give his orders out
Than she! Her waiting-maid is aide-de-camp,
My steward adjutant; my lacqueys serjeants,
That bring me her high pleasure how I march
And counter-march—when I'm on duty—when
I'm off—when suits it not to tell it me
Herself—"Sir William, thus my mistress says!"
As saying it were enough—no will of mine
Consulted! I will marry. Must I serve,
Better a wife my mistress, than a daughter!
And yet the vixen says, that if I marry,
I'll find she'll rule my wife, as well as me!

Enter TRUEWORTH.

Ah, Master Truworth! Welcome, Master Truworth!

True. Thanks, sir; I am glad to see you look so well!

Sir Wil. Ah, Master Truworth, when one turns the hill,
'Tis rapid going down! We climb by steps;

By strides we reach the bottom. Look at me, I say!
And guess my age!

True. Turn'd fifty.

Sir Wil. Ten years more! How marvellously well I wear! I think
You would not flatter me!—But scan me close,
And pryingly, as one who seeks a thing
He means to find—What signs of age dost see?

True. None!

Sir Wil. None about the corners of the eyes?
Lines that diverge like to the spider's joists,
Whereon he builds his airy fortalice?
They call them crow's feet—Has the ugly bird
Been perching there?—Eh?—Well?

True. There's something like,
But not what one must see, unless he's blind
Like steeple on a hill!

Sir Wil. [after a pause]. Your eyes are good!
I am certainly a wonder for my age;
I walk as well as ever! Do I stoop?

True. A plummet from your head would find your heel!

Sir Wil. It is my make—my make, good Master Truworth;
I do not study it. Do you observe
The hollow in my back? That's natural.
As now I stand, so stood I when a child,
A rosy, chubby boy!—I am youthful to
A miracle! My arm is firm as 'twas
At twenty. Feel it!

True. [Feeling *SIR WILLIAM'S* arm.] It is oak!

Sir Wil. Flint—flint
Isn't it, Master Truworth? Thou hast known me
Ten years and upwards. Think'st my leg is shrunk?

True. No.

Sir Wil. No! not in the calf?

True. As big a calf
As ever!

Sir Wil. Thank you, thank you—I believe it!
When others waste, 'tis growing-time with me!
I feel it, Master Truworth! Vigour, sir,
In every joint of me!—could run!—could leap!
Why shouldn't I marry? Knife and fork I play
Better than many a boy of twenty-five—
Why shouldn't I marry? If they come to wine,
My brace of bottles can I carry home,
And ne'er a headache. Death! why shouldn't I marry?

True. I see in nature no impediment.

Sir Wil. Impediment? She's all appliances!
And fortune's with me, too! The Widow Green
Gives hints to me. The pleasant Widow Green!
Whose fortieth year, instead of autumn, brings
A second summer in. Odds bodikins,
How young she looks! What life is in her eyes!

What ease is in her gait!—while, as she walks,
 Her waist, still tapering, takes it pliantly!
 How lollingly she bears her head withal:
 On this side, now—now, that! When enters she
 A drawing-room, what worlds of gracious things
 Her curtesy says!—she sinks with such a sway,
 Greeting on either hand the company,
 Then slowly rises to her state again!
 She is the empress of the card-table!
 Her hand and arm!—Gods, did you see her deal—
 With curved and pliant wrist dispense the pack,
 Which, at the touch of her fair fingers flies!
 How soft she speaks—how very soft! Her voice
 Comes melting from her round and swelling throat,
 Reminding you of sweetest, mellowest things—
 Plums, peaches, apricots, and nectarines—
 Whose bloom is poor to paint her cheeks and lips.
 By Jove, I'll marry!

True. You forget, Sir William,
 I do not know the lady.

Sir Wil. Great your loss!
 By all the gods I'll marry!—but my daughter
 Must needs be married first. She rules my house;
 Would rule it still, and will not have me wed.
 A clever, handsome, darling, forward minx!
 When I became a widower, the reins
 Her mother dropp'd she caught,—a hoyden girl;
 Nor, since, would e'er give up; howe'er I strove
 To coax or catch them from her. One way still
 Or t'other she would keep them—laugh, pout, plead;
 Now vanquish me with water, now with fire;
 Would box my face, and, ere I well could ope
 My mouth to chide her, stop it with a kiss!
 The monkey! what a plague she's to me! How
 I love her!—How I love the Widow Green!

True. Then marry her!

Sir Wil. I tell thee, first of all
 Must needs my daughter marry. See I not
 A hope of that. She nought affects the sex:
 Comes suitor after suitor—all in vain.
 Fast as they bow she curtsies, and says "Nay!"
 Or she, a woman, lacks a woman's heart,
 Or has a special taste which none can hit.

True. Or taste, perhaps, which is already hit.

Sir Wil. Eh!—how?

True. Remember you no country friend,
 Companion of her walks—her squire to church,
 Her beau whenever she went a-visiting—
 Before she came to town?

Sir Wil. No!

True. None?—art sure?
 No playmate when she was a girl?

Sir Wil. O! ay!
That Master Wildrake, I pray'd thee go
And wait for at the inn; but had forgotten.
Is he come?

True. And in the house. Some friends that met him,
As he alighted, laid strong hands upon him,
And made him stop for dinner. We had else
Been earlier with you.

Sir Wil. Ha! I am glad he is come.

True. She may be smit with him.

Sir Wil. As cat with dog!

True. He heard her voice as we came up the stairs,
And darted straight to join her.

Sir Wil. You shall see
What wondrous calm and harmony take place,
When fire meets gunpowder!

Con. [*without*]. Who sent for you?
What made you come?

Wild. [*without*]. To see the town, not you!
A kiss!

Con. I vow I'll not.

Wild. I swear you shall.

Con. A saucy cub! I vow, I had as lief
Your whipper-in had kiss'd me.

Sir Wil. Do you hear?

True. I do. Most pleasing discords!

Enter CONSTANCE and WILDRAKE.

Con. Father, speak
To neighbour Wildrake!

Sir Wil. Very glad to see him!

Wild. I thank you, good Sir William! Give you joy
Of your good looks!

Con. What, Phœbe!—Phœbe!—Phœbe!

Sir Wil. What want'st thou with thy lap-dog?

Con. Only, sir,

To welcome neighbour Wildrake! What a figure
To show himself in town!

Sir Wil. Wilt hold thy peace?

Con. Yes; if you'll lesson me to hold my laughter!
Wildrake.

Wild. Well?

Con. Let me walk thee in the Park—
How they would stare at thee!

Sir Wil. Wilt ne'er give o'er?

Wild. Nay, let her have her way—I heed her not!
Though to more courteous welcome I have a right;
Although I am neighbour Wildrake! Reason is reason!

Con. And right is right! so welcome, neighbour Wildrake;
I am very, very, very glad to see you!
Come, for a quarter of an hour, we'll e'en
Agree together! How do your horses, neighbour?

Wild. Pshaw!

Con. And your dogs?

Wild. Pshaw!

Con. Whipper-in and huntsman?

Sir Wil. Converse of things thou know'st to talk about!

Con. And keep him silent, father, when I know

He cannot talk of any other things?

How does thy hunter? What a sorry trick

He play'd thee t'other day, to balk his leap!

And throw thee, neighbour! Did he balk the leap?

Confess! You sportsmen never are to blame!

Say you are fowlers, 'tis your dog's in fault!

Say you are anglers, 'tis your tackle's wrong;

Say you are hunters, why the honest horse

That bears your weight, must bear your blunders too!

Why, whither go you?

Wild. Anywhere from thee.

Con. With me you mean.

Wild. I mean it not.

Con. You do!

I'll give you fifty reasons for't—and first,

Where you go, neighbour, I'll go!

[*They go out—WILD. pettishly—CONSTANCE laughing.*]

Sir Wil. Do you mark?

Much love is there!

True. Indeed, a heap, or none!

I'd wager on the heap!

Sir Wil. Ay!—Do you think

These discords, as in the musician's art,

Are subtle servitors to harmony?

That all this war's for peace? This wrangling but

A masquerade where love his roguish face

Conceals beneath an ugly visor!—Well?

True. Your guess and my conceit are not a mile

Apart. Unlike to other common flowers,

The flower of love shows various in the bud;

'Twill look a thistle, and 'twill blow a rose!

And with your leave I'll put it to the test;

Affect myself, for thy fair daughter, love—

Make him my confidant—dilate to him

Upon the graces of her heart and mind,

Feature and form—that well may comment bear—

Till—like the practised connoisseur, who finds

A gem of heart out in a household picture

The unskill'd owner held so cheap he grudged

Renewal of the chipp'd and tarnish'd frame,

But values now as priceless—I arouse him

Into a quick sense of the worth of that

Whose merit hitherto, from lack of skill,

Or dulling habit of acquaintanceship,

He has not been awake to.

Con. [*without*]. Neighbour Wildrake!

Sir Wil. Hither they come. I fancy well thy game!

O to be free to marry Widow Green!
I'll call her hence, anon—then ply him well.

[SIR WILLIAM goes out.]

Wild. [without]. Nay, neighbour Constance!

True. He is high in storm.

Enter WILDRAKE and CONSTANCE.

Wild. To Lincolnshire, I tell thee.

Con. Lincolnshire!

What, prithee, takes thee off to Lincolnshire?

Wild. Too great delight in thy fair company.

True. Nay, Master Wildrake, why away so soon?

You are scarce a day in town!—Extremes like this,

And starts of purpose, are the signs of love;

Though immatured as yet.

Con. He's long enough

In town! What should he here? He's lost in town:

No man is he for concerts, balls, or routs!

No game he knows at cards, save rare Pope Joan!

He ne'er could master dance beyond a jig;

And as for music, nothing to compare

To the melodious yelping of a hound,

Except the braying of his huntsman's horn!

Ask him to stay in town!

Sir Wil. [without]. Hoa, Constance!

Con. Sir!

Neighbour, a pleasant ride to Lincolnshire!

Good bye!

Sir Wil. [without]. Why, Constance!

Con. Coming, sir, Shake hands!

Neighbour, good bye! Don't look so woe-begone;

'Tis but a two-days' ride, and thou wilt see.

Rover, and Spot, and Nettle, and the rest

Of thy dear country friends!

Sir Wil. [without]. Constance! I say.

Con. Anon!—Commend me to the gentle souls,

And pat them for me!—Will you, neighbour Wildrake?

Sir Wil. [without]. Why, Constance! Constance!

Con. In a moment, sir!

Good bye!—I'd cry, dear neighbour—if I could!

Good bye!—A pleasant day when next you hunt!

And, prithee, mind thy horse don't balk his leap!

Good bye—and, after dinner, drink my health!

"A bumper, sirs, to neighbour Constance!"—Do!

And give it with a speech, wherein unfold

My many graces, more accomplishments,

And virtues topping either—in a word,

How I'm the fairest, kindest, best of neighbours!

[They go out severally.—TRUEWORTH trying to pacify

WILDRAKE—CONSTANCE laughing.]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Sir William's House.**Enter TRUEWORTH and WILDRAKE.*

Wild. Nay, Master Truworth, I must needs be gone!
 She treats me worse and worse! I am a stock,
 That words have none to pay her. For her sake
 I quit the town to-day. I like a jest,
 But hers are jests past bearing. I am her butt,
 She nothing does but practise on! A plague!—
 Fly her shafts ever your way?

True. Would they did!

Wild. Art mad?—or wishest she should drive thee so?

True. Thou knowest her not.

Wild. I know not neighbour Constance?

Then know I not myself, or anything

Which as myself I know!

True. Heigh ho!

Wild. Heigh ho!

Why what a burden that for a man's song!

'Twould fit a maiden that was sick for love.

Heigh ho! Come ride with me to Lincolnshire,

And turn thy "heigh ho!" into "hilly ho!"

True. Nay, rather tarry thou in town with me.

Men sometimes find a friend's hand of avail,

When useless proves their own. Wilt lend me thine?

Wild. Or may my horse break down in steeple-chase!

True. A steeple-chase. What made thee think of that?

I'm for the steeple—not to ride a race,

Only to get there!—nor alone, in sooth,

But in fair company!

Wild. Thou'rt not in love?

True. Heigh ho!

Wild. Thou wouldst not marry?

True. With your help.

Wild. And whom, I prithee?

True. Gentle Mistress Constance!

Wild. What!—neighbour Constance?—Never did I dream
 That mortal man would fall in love with her. [*Aside*]

In love with neighbour Constance!—I feel strange

At thought that she should marry!—[*Aside.*] Go to church

With neighbour Constance! That's a steeple-chase

I never thought of. I feel very strange!

What seest in neighbour Constance?

True. Lover's eyes

See with a vision proper to themselves;

Yet thousand eyes will vouch what mine affirm.

First, then, I see in her the mould express

Of woman—stature, feature, body, limb—

Breathing the gentle sex, we value most,
When most 'tis at antipodes with ours!

Wild. You mean that neighbour Constance is a woman?

Why, yes; she is a woman certainly.

True. So much for person. Now for her complexion.

What shall we liken to her dainty skin?

Her arm for instance?—

Wild. Snow will match it.

True. Snow!

It is her arm without the smoothness on't;

Then is not snow transparent? 'Twill not do.

Wild. A pearl's transparent!

True. So it is, but yet

Yields not elastic to the thrilled touch!

I know not what to liken to her arm

Except its beauteous fellow! O, to be

The chosen friend of two such neighbours!

Wild. Would

His tongue would make a halt. He makes too free

With neighbour Constance! Can't he let her arms

Alone! I trust their chosen friend

Will ne'er be he! I'm vex'd.

[*Aside.*

True. But graceful things

Grow doubly graceful in the graceful use!

Hast mark'd her, ever, walk the drawing-room?

Wild. [*snappishly*]. No.

True. No! Why, where have been your eyes?

Wild. In my head!

But I begin to doubt if open yet.

[*Aside.*

True. Yet that's a trifle to the dance; down which

She floats as though she were a form of air;

The ground feels not her foot, or tells not on't;

Her movements are the painting of the strain,

Its swell, its fall, its mirth, its tenderness!

Then is she fifty Constances!—each moment

Another one, and each, except its fellow,

Without a peer! You have danced with her?

Wild. I hate

To dance! I can't endure to dance!—Of course

You have danced with her?

True. I have.

Wild. You have?

True. I have.

Wild. I do abominate to dance!—Could carve

Fiddlers and company! A dancing man

To me was ever like a dancing dog!

Save less to be endured!—Ne'er saw I one

But I bethought me of the master's whip.

True. A man might bear the whip to dance with her!

Wild. Not if I had the laying of it on!

True. Well; let that pass. The lady is the theme.

Wild. Yes; make an end of it!—I'm sick of it.

[*Aside.*

True. How well she plays the harpsichord and harp!
How well she sings to them! Whoe'er would prove
The power of song, should hear thy neighbour sing,
Especially a love-song!

Wild. Does she sing
Such songs to thee?

True. O yes, and constantly.
For such I ever ask her.

Wild. Forward minx!

Maids should not sing love-songs to gentlemen!

Think'st neighbour Constance is a girl to love?

True. A girl to love?—Ay, and with all her soul!

Wild. How know you that?

True. I have studied close the sex.

Wild. You town-rakes are the devil for the sex!

True. Not your most sensitive and serious maid

I'd always take for deep impressions. Mind

The adage of the bow. The pensive brow

I have oft seen bright in wedlock, and anon

O'ercast in widowhood; then, bright again,

Ere half the season of the weeds was out;

While, in the airy one, I've known one cloud

Forerunner of a gloom that ne'er clear'd up—

So would it prove with neighbour Constance. Not

On superficial grounds she'll ever love:

But once she does, the odds are ten to one

Her first love is her last!

Wild. I wish I ne'er

Had come to town! I was a happy man

Among my dogs and horses. [*Aside.*] Hast thou broke

Thy passion to her?

True. Never.

Wild. Never?

True. No.

I hoped you'd act my proxy there.

Wild. I thank you.

True. I knew 'twould be a pleasure to you.

Wild. Yes;

A pleasure!—an unutterable pleasure!

True. Thank you! You make my happiness your own.

Wild. I do.

True. I see you do. Dear Master Wildrake!

O, what a blessing is a friend in need!

You'll go and court your neighbour for me?

Wild. Yes.

True. And says she "nay" at first, you'll press again.

Wild. Ay, and again!

True. There's one thing I mistrust—yea, most mistrust,
That of my poor deserts you'll make too much.

Wild. Fear anything but that.

True. 'Twere better far
You slightly spoke of them.

Wild. You think so?

True. Yes,

Or rather did not speak of them at all.

Wild. You think so?

True. Yes.

Wild. Then I'll not say a word
About them.

True. Thank you! A judicious friend
Is better than a zealous—You are both!

I see you'll plead my cause as 'twere your own;

Then stay in town, and win your neighbour for me;

Make me the envy of a score of men

That die for her as I do.—Make her mine,

And when the last "Amen!" declares complete

The mystic tying of the holy knot,

And 'fore the priest she stands a blushing wife,

Be thine the right to claim the second kiss

She pays for change from maidenhood to wifehood. [*Goes out.*]

Wild. Take that thyself! The first be mine, or none!

A man in love with neighbour Constance!—Never

Dream'd I that such a thing could come to pass!

Such person, such endowments, such a soul!

I never thought to ask myself before

If she were man or woman! Suitors, too,

Dying for her! I'll e'en make one among 'em!

Woo her to go to church along with him,

And for my pains the privilege to take

The second kiss? I'll take the second kiss,

And first one too—and last! No man shall touch

Her lips but me. I'll massacre the man

That looks upon her! Yet what chance have I

With lovers of the town, whose study 'tis

To please your lady belles!—who dress, walk, talk,

To hit their tastes—what chance, a country squire

Like me? Yet your true fair, I have heard, prefers

The man before his coat at any time;

And such a one may neighbour Constance be.

I'll show a limb with any of them! Silks

I'll wear, nor keep my legs in cases more!

I'll learn to dance town-dances, and frequent

Their concerts! Die away at melting strains,

Or seem to do so—far the easier thing,

And as effective quite; leave nought undone

To conquer neighbour Constance.

Enter LASH.

Lash. Sir.

Wild. Well, sir?

Lash. So please you, sir, your horse is at the door.

Wild. Unsaddle him again and put him up.

And, hark you, get a tailor for me, sir—

The rarest can be found.

Lash. The man's below, sir,
That owns the mare your worship thought to buy.

Wild. Tell him I do not want her, sir.

Lash. I vow,
You will not find her match in Lincolnshire.

Wild. Go to! She's spavin'd.

Lash. Sir!

Wild. Touch'd in the wind.

Lash. I trust my master be not touch'd in the head! [*Aside.*
I vow, a faultless beast!

Wild. I want her not,
And that's your answer—Go to the hosier's, sir,
And bid him send me samples of his gear,
Of twenty different kinds.

Lash. I will, sir.—Sir!

Wild. Well, sir.

Lash. Squire Brush's huntsman's here, and says
His master's kennel is for sale.

Wild. The dogs
Are only fit for hanging!

Lash. Finer bred—

Wild. Sirrah, if more to me thou talk'st of dogs,
Horses, or aught that to thy craft belongs,
Thou mayst go hang for me!—A cordwainer
Go fetch me straight—the choicest in the town.
Away, sir! Do thy errands smart and well
As thou canst crack thy whip! [*LASH goes out.*] Dear
neighbour Constance,
I'll give up horses, dogs, and all for thee! [*Goes out.*

SCENE II.

Enter WIDOW GREEN and LYDIA.

W. Green. Lydia, my gloves. If Master Waller calls,
I shall be in at three; and say the same
To old Sir William Fondlove. Tarry yet!—
What progress think you make I in the heart
Of fair young Master Waller? Gods, my girl,
It is a heart to win, and man, as well!
How speed I, think you? Didst, as I desired,
Detain him in my absence when he call'd,
And, without seeming, sound him touching me?

Lydia. Yes.

W. Green. And affects he me, or not? How guess you?
What said he of me? Look'd he balk'd, or not,
To find me not at home? Inquired he, when
I would be back, as much he long'd to see me?
What did he—said he? Come!—Is he in love,
Or like to fall into it? Goes well my game,
Or shall I have my labour for my pains?

Lydia. I think he is in love.—O poor evasion!
O to love truth, and yet not dare to speak it! [*Aside.*]

W. Green. You think he is in love?—I'm sure of it!
As well have ask'd you has he eyes and ears,
And brain and heart to use them? Maidens throw
Trick after trick away, but widows know
To play their cards! How am I looking, Lydia?

Lydia. E'en as you ever look.

W. Green. Handsome, my girl?
Eh? Clear in my complexion? Eh?—brimful
Of spirits? not too much of me, nor yet
Too little?—Eh?—A woman worth a man?
Look at me, Lydia! Would you credit, girl,
I was a scarecrow before marriage?

Lydia. Nay!—

W. Green. Girl, but I tell thee "yea." That gown of thine—
And thou art slender—would have hung about me!
There's something of me now! good sooth, enough!
Lydia, I'm quite contented with myself;
I'm just the thing, methinks, a widow should be.
So, Master Waller, you believe, affects me?
But, Lydia, not enough to hook the fish;
To prove the angler's skill, it must be caught;
And lovers, Lydia, like the angler's prey—
Which, when he draws it near the landing-place,
Takes warning and runs out the slender line,
And with a spring perchance jerks off the hold—
When we do fish for them, and hook, and think
They are all but in the creel, will make the dart
That sets them free to roam the flood again!

Lydia. Is't so?

W. Green. Thou'lt find it so, or better luck
Than many another maid! Now mark me, Lydia,
Sir William Fondlove fancies me. 'Tis well!
I do not fancy him! What should I do
With an old man?—Attend upon the gout,
Or the rheumatics! Wrap me in the cloud
Of a darken'd chamber—'stead of shining out,
The sun of balls, and routs, and gala-days!
But he affects me, Lydia; so he may!
Now take a lesson from me—Jealousy
Had better go with open, naked breast,
Than pinn'd or button'd with a gem—Less plague,
The plague-spot; that comes quickly to an end
One way or t'other, girl—Yet, never love
Was warm without a spice of jealousy.
Thy lesson now—Sir William Fondlove's rich,
And riches, though they're paste, yet being many,
We often cast the jewel love away for.
I use him but for Master Waller's sake
Dost like my policy?

Lydia. You will not chide me?

W. Green. Nay, Lydia, I am pleased to hear thy thoughts,
They are such novel things—plants that thrive well
With country air! I marvel still they flower,
And thou so long in town! Speak freely, girl!

Lydia. I cannot think love thrives by artifice,
Or wears disguise, if it be love indeed.
I would not hide one portion of my heart
From him I gave it to deservedly,
Nor feign a wish, to mask a wish that was,
Howe'er to prosper. For no cause except
Myself would I be loved. What were't to me,
My lover valued me the more, the more
He saw me precious in another's eyes,
When his alone the vision I would show
Deserving in? I have sought the reason oft,
They paint Love as a child, and still have thought,
It was because true love, like infancy,
Frank, trusting, unobservant of its mood,
Avows its wish at once, and means no more!

W. Green. Thou'lt find out better when thy time is come.
Now wouldst believe I love not Master Waller?
I never knew what love was, Lydia—
That is, as your romances have it. First,
I married for a fortune. Having that,
And being freed from him that brought it me,
I marry now, to please my vanity,
A man that is the fashion. O the delight
Of a sensation, and yourself the cause!
To note the stir of eyes, and ears, and tongues,
When they shall usher Mistress Waller in,
Late Widow Green, her hand upon the arm
Of her young, handsome husband!—How my fan
Will be in requisition—I protest
My heart begins to flutter now—my blood
To mount into my cheek! My honey-moon
Will be a month of triumphs!—"Mistress Waller!"
That name, for which a score of damsels sigh,
And but the widow had the wit to win!
Why it will be the talk of east and west,
And north and south!—The *children* loved the man,
And lost him so—I liked, but there I stopp'd;
For what is it to love, but mind and heart
And soul upon another to depend?
Depend upon another?—Nothing be
But what another wills?—Give up the rights
Of mine own brain and heart?—I thank my stars
I never came to that extremity. [Goes out.]

Lydia. She never loved, indeed!—She knows not love,
Except what's told of it!—She never felt it.
To stem a torrent, easy, looking at it;
But once you venture in, you nothing know
Except the speed with which you're borne away,

Howe'er you strive to check it. She suspects not
 Her maid, not she, brings Master Waller hither.
 Nor dare I undeceive her. Well might she say
 Her young and handsome husband! Yet his face
 And person are the least of him, and vanish
 When shines his soul out through his open eye!
 He all but says he loves me!—His respect
 Has vanquish'd me! He looks the will to speak
 His passion, and the fear that ties his tongue—
 The fear?—He loves not honestly!—and yet
 I'll swear he loves!—I'll swear he honours me!
 It is but my condition that's a bar,
 Denies him give me all! But knew he me
 Well as I know myself!—Whate'er his purpose,
 When next we speak, he shall declare it to me. [Goes out.]

SCENE III.—*Sir William Fondlove's.*

Enter CONSTANCE, *dressed for riding, and* PHOEBE.

Con. Well, Phœbe, would you know me? Are those locks
 That cluster on my forehead and my cheek,
 Sufficient mask? Show I what I would seem,
 A lady for the chase? My darken'd brows
 And heighten'd colour, foreign to my face,
 Do they my face pass off for stranger too?
 What think you?

Phœbe. That he'll ne'er discover you.

Con. Then send him to me—Say a lady wants
 To speak with him—unless indeed it be
 A man in lady's gear—I look so bold
 And speak so gruff! Away [*PHOEBE goes out.*] That I am glad
 He stays in town, I own; but, if I am,
 'Tis only for the tricks I'll play upon him;
 And now begin—persuading him his fame
 Hath made me fancy him, and brought me hither
 On visit to his worship. Soft! his foot!
This he? Why, what has metamorphosed him,
 And changed my sportsman to fine gentleman?
 Well he becomes his clothes!—But check my wonder,
 Lest I forget myself—Why, what an air
 The fellow hath!—A man to set a cap at!

Enter WILDRAKE.

Wild. Kind lady, I attend your fair commands.

Con. My veiled face denies me justice, sir,
 Else would you see a maiden's blushing cheek
 Do penance for her forwardness—too late,
 I own, repented of. Yet if 'tis true,
 By our own hearts of others we may judge,

I run no peril showing mine to you,
 Whose heart, I'm sure, is noble. Worthy sir,
 Souls attract souls, when they're of kindred vein.
 The life that you love, I love. Well I know,
 'Mongst those who breast the feats of the bold chase,
 You stand without a peer; and for myself,
 I dare avow 'mong such, none follows them
 With heartier glee than I do!

Wild. Churl were he
 That would gainsay you, madam!

Con. [*Curtsyng.*] What delight
 To back the flying steed, that challenges
 The wind for speed!—seems native more of air
 Than earth!—whose burden only lends him fire?—
 Whose soul, in his task, turns labour into sport!
 Who makes your pastime his! I sit him now!
 He takes away my breath!—He makes me reel!
 I touch not earth—I see not—hear not—All
 Is ecstasy of motion!

Wild. You are used,
 I see, to the chase.

Con. I am, sir! Then the leap,
 To see the saucy barrier, and know
 The mettle that can clear it! Then, your time
 To prove you master of the manège. Now
 You keep him well together for a space,
 Both horse and rider braced as you were one,
 Scanning the distance—then you give him rein,
 And let him fly at it, and o'er he goes
 Light as a bird on wing.

Wild. 'Twere a bold leap,
 I see, that turn'd you, madam.

Con. [*Curtsyng.*] Sir you're good!
 And then the hounds, sir! Nothing I admire
 Beyond the running of the well-train'd pack.
 The training's everything! Keen on the scent!
 At fault, none losing heart!—but all at work!
 None leaving his task to another!—answering
 The watchful huntsman's caution, check, or cheer,
 As steed his rider's rein! Away they go!
 How close they keep together!—What a pack!
 Nor turn, nor ditch, nor stream divides them—as
 They moved with one intelligence, act, will!
 And then the concert they keep up!—enough
 To make one tenant of the merry wood,
 To list their jocund music!

Wild. You describe
 The huntsman's pastime to the life!

Con. I love it!
 To wood and glen, hamlet and town, it is
 A laughing holiday!—Not a hill-top
 But's then alive! Footmen with horsemen vie,

All earth's astir, roused with the revelry;
Of vigour, health, and joy!—Cheer awakes cheer,
While Echo's mimic tongue, that never tires,
Keeps up the hearty din! Each face is then
Its neighbour's glass—where gladness sees itself,
And at the bright reflection, grows more glad!
Breaks into tenfold mirth!—laughs like a child!
Would make a gift of its heart, it is so free!
Would scarce accept a kingdom; 'tis so rich!
Shakes hands with all, and vows it never knew
That life was life before!

Wild. Nay, every way.
You do fair justice, lady, to the chase;
But fancies change.

Con. Such fancy is not mine.

Wild. I would it were not mine, for your fair sake.
I have quite given o'er the chase.

Con. You say not so!

Wild. Forsworn, indeed, the sportsman's life, and grown,
As you may partly see, town-gentleman.
I care not now to mount a steed, unless
To amble 'long the street; no paces mind,
Except my own, to walk the drawing-room,
Or in the ball-room to come off with grace;
No leap for me, to match the light coupé;
No music like the violin and harp—
To which the huntsman's dog and horn I find
Are somewhat coarse and homely minstrelsy:
Then fields of ill-dress'd rustics, you'll confess,
Are well-exchanged for rooms of beaux and belles;
In short, I've ta'en another thought of life—
Become another man!

Con. The cause, I pray?

Wild. The cause of causes, lady. [Sighs deeply.

Con. He's in love! [Aside.

Wild. To you, of women, I would name it last;
Yet your frank bearing merits like return;
I, that pursued the game, am caught myself
In chase I never dream'd of! [Goes out.

Con. He is in love!

Wildrake's in love! That keeps the youth in town,
Turns him from sportsman to town-gentleman.
I never dream'd that he would fall in love!
In love with whom?—I'll find the vixen out!
What right has she to set her cap at him?
I warrant her, a forward artful minx!
I hate him worse than ever.—I'll do all
I can to spoil the match. He'll never marry—
Sure he will never marry! He will have
More sense than that! My back doth ope and shut—
My temples throb and shoot—I am cold and hot!
Were he to marry, there would be an end

To neighbour Constance—neighbour Wildrake—why
I should not know myself!

Enter TRUEWORTH.

Dear Master Truworth,
What think you!—neighbour Wildrake is in love!
In love!—Would you believe it, Master Truworth?
Ne'er heed my dress and looks, but answer me.
Know'st thou of any lady he has seen
That's like to cozen him?

True. I am not sure—

We talk'd to-day about the Widow Green!

Con. Her that my father fancies.—Let him wed her!

Marry her to-morrow—if he will, to-night.

I can't spare neighbour Wildrake—neighbour Wildrake!

Although I would not marry him myself,

I could not bear that other married him!

Go to my father—'tis a proper match!

He has my leave! He's welcome to bring home

The Widow Green. I'll give up house and all!

She would be mad to marry neighbour Wildrake;

He would wear out her patience—plague her to death,

As he does me.—She must not marry him! [*They go out.*]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Widow Green's.*

Enter MASTER WALLER, following LYDIA.

Wal. But thou shalt hear me, gentle Lydia.

Sweet maiden, thou art frighten'd at thyself!

Thy own perfections 'tis that talk to thee.

Thy beauty rich!—Thy richer grace!—thy mind,

More rich again than that, though richest each!

Except for these, I had no tongue for thee,

Eyes for thee!—ears!—had never follow'd thee!

Had never loved thee, Lydia!—Hear me!—

Lydia. Love

Should seek its match.—No match am I for thee.

Wal. Right! Love should seek its match; and that is,
love

Or nothing! Station—fortune—find their match

In things resembling them. They are not love!

Comes love—that subtle essence, without which

Life were but leaden dulness!—weariness!

A plodding trudger on a heavy road!—

Comes it of title-deeds which fools may boast?

Or coffers vilest hands may hold the keys of?
O, no! It comes of hearts to hearts attracted
By irresistible affinity.

You reason right! Yes; love should seek its match—
Then, Lydia, give my love its match in thine,
And make me lord of happiness, so rich
As monarchs have no thought of on their thrones,
Though kingdoms bear them up.

Lydia. Wast thou a monarch,
Me wouldst thou make thy queen?

Wal. I would.

Lydia. What!—Pass
A princess by for me?

Wal. I would.

Lydia. Suppose
Thy subjects would prevent thee?

Wal. Then, in spite
Of them!

Lydia. Suppose they were too strong for thee?

Wal. Why then, I'd give them up my throne—content
With that thou'dst yield me in thy gentle breast.

Lydia. Can subjects do what monarchs do?

Wal. Far more!
Far less!

Lydia. Among those things, where more their power,
Is marriage one?

Wal. Yes.

Lydia. And no part of love,
You say, is rank or wealth?

Wal. No part of love.

Lydia. Is marriage part of love?

Wal. At times it is,
At times is not. Men love and marry—love
And marry not.

Lydia. Then have they not the power;
So must they, hapless, part with those they love!

Wal. O no! not part! How could they love and part?

Lydia. How could they love not part, not free to wed?

Wal. Alone in marriage doth not union lie!

Lydia. Alone where hands are free!—O yes—alone!
Love that is love, bestoweth all it can!

It is protection, if 'tis anything,
Which nothing in its object leaves exposed

Its care can shelter.—Love that's free to wed,
Not wedding, but profanes the name of love;

Which is, on warrant higher far than Earth's,
For Heaven sat approving at its feast,

A holy thing!—Why make you love to me?

Women whose hearts are free, by nature tender,
Their fancies hit by those they are besought by,

Will first impressions quickly—deeply take;
And, balk'd in their election, have been known

To droop a whole life through! Gain for a maid, to cradle to
A broken heart! to barter her young love, to cradle to
And find she changed it for a counterfeit!

Wal. If there is truth in man, I love thee!—Hear me!
In wedlock, families claim property.
Old notions, which we needs must humour, often
Bar us to wed where we are forced to love!
Thou hear'st?

Lydia. I do.

Wal. My family is proud;
Our ancestor, whose arms we bear, achieved
An earldom by his deeds. 'Tis not enough—
I please myself!—I must please others, who
In wealth and station only see desert.
Thou hear'st?

Lydia. I do.

Wal. I cannot marry thee,
And must I lose thee?—Do not turn away!
Without the altar I can honour thee!
Can cherish thee, nor swear it to the priest;
For more than life I love thee!

Lydia. Say thou hatest me,
And I'll believe thee!—Wherein differs love
From hate, to do the work of hate—destroy?
Thy ancestor won title by his deeds!
Was one of them, to teach an honest maid
The deed of sin—first steal her love, and then
Her virtue? If thy family is proud,
Mine, sir, is worthy! if we are poor, the lack
Of riches, sir, is not the lack of shame,
That I should act a part, would raise a blush,
Nor fear to burn an honest brother's cheek!
Thou wouldst share a throne with me!—Thou wouldst rob
me of

A throne!—reduce me from dominion to
Base vassalage!—pull off my crown for me;
And give my forehead in its place a brand!
You have insulted me.—To show you, sir,
The heart you make so light of, you are beloved—
But she that tells you so, tells you beside
She ne'er beholds you more! [Goes out.]

Wal. Stay, Lydia!—No!—
'Tis vain! She is in virtue resolute,
As she is bland and tender in affection!—
No mood but well becomes her—yea, adorns her.
She turns unsightly anger into beauty!
Sour scorn grows sweetness, touching her sweet lips!
And indignation, lighting on her brow,
Transforms to brightness as the cloud to gold.
That overhangs the sun! I love her!—Ay!
And all the throes of serious passion feel
At thought of losing her!—so, my light love,

Which but her beauty first affected, now
Her soul has metamorphosed—made a thing
Of solid thoughts and wishes—I must have her!

Enter WIDOW GREEN, unnoticed by WALLER, who continues abstracted.

W. Green. What!—Master Waller, and contemplative!
Presumptive proof of love! Of me he thinks!
Revolves the point “to be or not to be!”

“To be!” by all the triumphs of my sex!
There was a sigh! My life upon’t, that sigh,
If construed, would translate “Dear Widow Green!”

Wal. Enchanting woman!

W. Green. That is I!—most deep
Abstraction, sure concomitant of love.
Now could I see his busy fancy’s painting,
How should I blush to gaze upon myself!

Wal. The matchless form of woman! The choice culling
Of the aspiring artist, whose ambition
Robs Nature to out-do her—the perfections
Of her rare various workmanship combines
To aggrandize his art at Nature’s cost,
And make a paragon!

W. Green. Gods! how he draws me!
Soon as he sees me at my feet he falls!
Good Master Waller!

Wal. Ha! The Widow Green!

W. Green. He is confounded!—So am I. O dear!
How catching is emotion.—He can’t speak!
O beautiful confusion! Amiable
Excess of modesty with passion struggling!
Now comes he to declare himself, but wants
The courage.—I must help him.—Master Waller!

Enter SIR WILLIAM FONDLOVE.

Sir Wil. Dear Widow Green!

W. Green. Sir William Fondlove!

Wal. Thank

My lucky stars! [*Aside.*]

W. Green. I would he had the gout,
And kept his room! [*Aside.*] You’re welcome, dear Sir
William!

’Tis very, very kind of you to call.
Sir William Fondlove—Master Waller. Pray
Be seated, gentlemen.—He shall requite me
For his untimely visit. Though the nail
Be driven home, it may want clinching, yet,
To make the hold complete! For that, I’ll use him. [*Aside.*]
You’re looking monstrous well, Sir William! and
No wonder. You’re a mine of happy spirits!
Some women talk of such and such a style
Of features in a man.—Give me good humour;

That lights the homeliest visage up with beauty,
And makes the face, where beauty is already,
Quite irresistible!

Sir Wil. That's hitting hard.

[*Aside.*

Dear Widow Green, don't say so! On my life
You flatter me.—You almost make me blush!

W. Green. I durst not turn to Master Waller now,
Nor need I.—I can fancy how he looks!

I warrant me he scowls on poor Sir William,
As he could eat him up.—I must improve

His discontent; and, so, make sure of him.

[*Aside.*

I flatter you, Sir William! O, you men!

You men, that talk so meek, and all the while

Know your own power so well! Now who would think

You had a marriageable daughter! You

Must sure have married young.

Sir Wil. A boy!—a boy!

Who knew not his own mind.

W. Green. Your daughter's twenty.

Come, you at least were twenty when you married;

That makes you forty.

Sir Wil. O dear! Widow Green.

W. Green. Not forty?

Sir Wil. Nay, you quite embarrass me!

I own I have the feelings of a boy,

The freshness and the glow of spring-time, yet,—

The relish, yet, for my young school-days' sports;

Could whip a top—could shoot at taw—could play

At prison-bars and leap-frog—if I might—

Not with a limb, perhaps, as supple, but

With quite as supple will.—Yet I confess

To more than forty!

W. Green. Do you say so? Well,

I'll never guess a man's age by his looks

Again.—Poor Master Waller! He must writhe

To hear I think Sir William is so young.

I'll turn his visit yet to more account.

[*Aside.*

A handsome ring, Sir William, that you wear!

Sir Wil. Pray look at it.

W. Green. The mention of a ring

Will take his breath away.

Wal. She must be mine

Whate'er her terms!

[*Aside.*

W. Green. I'll steal a look at him!

Wal. What! though it be the ring?—the marriage ring?

If that she sticks at, she deserves to wear it!

Oh, the debate which love and prudence hold!

[*Aside.*

W. Green. How highly he is wrought upon!—His hands

Are clench'd!—I warrant me his frame is shaking!

Poor Master Waller! I have fill'd his heart

Brimful with passion for me.—The delight

Of proving thus my power!

Sir Wil. Dear Widow Green!—
She hears not!—How the ring hath set her thinking!
I'll try and make her jealous. [*Aside.*—Widow Green!

W. Green. Sir William Fondlove!

Sir Wil. Would you think that ring
Could tell a story?

W. Green. Could it? Ah, Sir William!
I fear you are a rogue!

Sir Wil. O no!

W. Green. You are!

Sir Wil. No, on my honour! Would you like to hear
The story of the ring?

W. Green. Much,—very much.

Sir Wil. Think'st we may venture draw our chairs apart
A little more from Master Waller?

W. Green. Yes.

He'll bring it to a scene! Dear—Dear Sir William,
How much I am obliged to him! A scene!
Gods, we shall have a scene!—Good Master Waller,
Your leave I pray you for a minute, while
Sir William says a word or two to me.
He durst not trust his tongue for jealousy! [*Aside.*
Now, dear Sir William!

Sir Wil. You must promise me
You will not think me vain.

W. Green. No fear of that.

Sir Wil. Nor given to boast.

W. Green. O! dear Sir William!

Sir Wil. Nor
A flirt!

W. Green. O! who would take you for a flirt?

Sir Wil. How very kind you are!

W. Green. Go on, Sir William.

Sir Wil. Upon my life, I fear you'll think me vain!
I'm cover'd with confusion at the thought
Of what I've done. 'Twas very, very wrong
To promise you the story of the ring;
Men should not talk of such things.

W. Green. Such as what?

As ladies' favours?

Sir Wil. 'Pon my life, I feel
As I were like to sink into the earth.

W. Green. A lady then it was that gave it you?

Sir Wil. Don't ask me to say yes, but only scan
The inside of the ring. How much she's moved. [*Aside.*

Wal. They to each other company enough!
I, company for no one but myself.

I'll take my leave, nor trouble them to pay
The compliments of parting. Lydia! Lydia! [*Goes out.*

W. Green. What's here? "Eliza!"—So it *was* a lady!
How wondrously dear Master Waller bears it.
He surely will not hold much longer out. [*Aside.*

Sir William! Nay, look up! What cause to cast
Your eyes upon the ground? What an it were
A lady?

Sir Wil. You're not angry?

W. Green. No!

Sir Wil. She is.

I'll take the tone she speaks in 'gainst the word,
For fifty crowns. I have not told you all
About the ring; though I would sooner die
Than play the braggart!—yet as truth is truth,
And told by halves, may from a simple thing,
By misconstruction, to a monster grow,
I'll tell the whole truth!

W. Green. Dear Sir William, do!

Sir Wil. The lady was a maid, and very young;
Nor there in justice to her must I stop,
But say that she was beautiful as young;
And add to that, that she was learned too,
Almost enough to win for her that title,
Our sex, in poor conceit of their own merits,
And narrow spirit of monopoly,
And jealousy, which gallantry eschews,
Bestow on women who assert their right
To minds as well as we.

W. Green. What! a blue-stocking?

Sir Wil. I see!—She'll come to calling names at last!

[*Aside.*

I should offend myself to quote the term.
But, to return, for yet I have not done;
And further yet may go, then progress on
That she was young, that she was beautiful.
A wit and learn'd are nought to what's to come—
She had a heart!—

W. Green [*who during SIR WILLIAM'S speech has turned gradually*]. What, Master Waller gone! [*Aside.*

Sir Wil. I say she had a heart—

W. Green. [*Starting up*—*SIR WILLIAM also.*] A plague
upon her!

Sir Wil. I knew she would break out!

[*Aside.*

W. Green. Here, take the ring.

It has ruin'd me!

Sir Wil. I vow thou hast no cause
For anger!

W. Green. Have I not? I am undone,
And all about that bauble of a ring!

Sir Wil. You're right, it is a bauble.

W. Green. And the minx

That gave it thee!

Sir Wil. You're right, she was a minx.

I knew 'twould come to calling names at last.

[*Aside.*

W. Green. Sir William Fondlove, leave me.

Sir Wil. Widow Green!—

W. Green. You have undone me, sir!

Sir Wil. Don't say so!—Don't! It was a girl—a child that gave it me!

W. Green. Do you hear me, sir? I bade you leave me.

Sir Wil. If

I thought you were so jealous.

W. Green. Jealous, sir!

Sir William! quit my house!

Sir Wil. A little girl

To make you jealous!

W. Green. Sir, you'll drive me mad!

Sir Wil. A child, a perfect child, not ten years old!

W. Green. Sir, I would be alone, sir!

Sir Wil. Young enough

To dandle still her doll!

W. Green. Sir William Fondlove!

Sir Wil. Dear Widow Green!

W. Green. I hate you, sir!—Detest you!—Never wish
To see you more! You have ruin'd me!—Undone me!
A blighted life I wear, and all through you!
The fairest hopes that ever woman nourish'd
You've canker'd in the very blowing! bloom,
And sweet destroy'd, and nothing left me, but
The melancholy stem.

Sir Wil. And all about

A little slut I gave a rattle to!—

Would pester me for gingerbread and comfits!—

A little roguish feigning!—A love-trick!

I play'd to prove your love!

W. Green. Sir William Fondlove!

If of my own room you'll not suffer me

To be the mistress, I shall leave it to you!

Sir Wil. Dear Widow Green! The ring——

W. Green. Confound the ring,

The donor of it, thee, and everything!

[Goes out.]

Sir Wil. She is over head and ears in love with me!

She's mad with love! There's love and all its signs!

She's jealous of me unto very death!

Poor Widow Green! I warrant she is now

In tears!—I think I hear her sob!—Poor thing,

Sir William! O *Sir William!* You have raised

A furious tempest! Set your wits to work

To turn it to a calm. No question that

She loves me!—None, then, that she'll take me! So

I'll have the marriage settlements made out

To-morrow, and a special license got,

And marry her the next day! I shall make

Quick work of it, and take her by surprise!

Who but a widower a widow's match?

What could she see with else but partial eyes

To guess me only forty! I'm a wonder!

What shall I pass for in my wedding suit!

I vow I am a puzzle to myself,
As well as all the world besides.—Odds life!
To win the heart of buxom Widow Green!

[Goes out.]

WIDOW GREEN *re-enters with* LYDIA.

W. Green. At last the dotard's gone! Fly, Lydia, fly,
This letter bear to Master Waller straight;
Quick, quick, or I'm undone! He is abused,
And I must undeceive him—own my love,
And heart and hand at his disposal lay.
Answer me not, my girl—Obey me! Fly.

[Goes out.]

Lydia. Untowardly it falls!—I had resolved
This hour to tell her I must quit her service!
Go to his house! I will not disobey
Her last commands!—I'll leave it at the door,
And as it closes on me think I take
One more adieu of him!—Hard destiny!

[Goes out.]

SCENE II.—*A Room in Sir William's.*

Enter CONSTANCE.

Con. The booby! He must fall in love, indeed!
And now he's nought but sentimental looks
And sentences, pronounced 'twixt breath and voice!
And attitudes of tender languishment!
Nor can I get from him the name of her
Hath turn'd him from a stock into a fool.
He hems and haws, now titters, now looks grave!
Begins to speak and halts! takes off his eyes
To fall in contemplation on a chair,
A table, or the ceiling, wall or floor!
I'll plague him worse and worse! O here he comes!

Enter WILDRAKE.

Wild. Despite her spiteful usage, I'm resolved
To tell her now. Dear neighbour Constance!

Con. Fool!

Accost me like a lady, sir! I hate
The name of neighbour!

Wild. Mistress Constance, then—
I'll call thee that.

Con. Don't call me anything!
I hate to hear thee speak—to look at thee,
To dwell in the same house with thee!

Wild. In what
Have I offended?

Con. What!—I hate an ape!

Wild. An ape!

Con. Who bade thee ape the gentleman?
And put on dress that don't belong to thee?

Go! change thee with thy whipper-in or huntsman,
And none will doubt thou wearest thy own clothes.

Wild. A pretty pass! Mock'd for the very dress
I bought to pleasure her! Untoward things
Are women! [*Aside. Walks backwards and forwards.*]

Con. Do you call that walking? Pray
What makes you twist your body so, and take
Such pains to turn your toes out? If you'd walk,
Walk thus! Walk like a man, as I do now! [*Walking.*]
Is yours the way a gentleman should walk?
You neither walk like man nor gentleman!
I'll show you how to walk. [*Mimicking him.*] Do you call that
walking?

Wild. My thanks, for a drill-serjeant twice a day
For her sake! [*Aside.*]

Con. Now, of all things in the world,
What made you dance last night?

Wild. What made me dance?

Con. Right! It was anything but dancing! Steps
That never came from dancing-school—nor English,
Nor Scotch, nor Irish! You must try to cut,
And how you did it! [*Cuts.*] That's the way to cut!
And then your chassé! Thus you went, and thus [*mimicking*
him],

As though you had been playing at hop, step,
And jump!—And yet you look'd so monstrous pleased,
And play'd the simpleton with such a grace,
Taking their tittering for compliment!
I could have box'd you soundly for't. Ten times
Denied I that I knew you.

Wild. Twenty guineas
Were better in the gutter thrown than gone
To fee a dancing-master! [*Aside.*]

Con. And you're grown
An amateur in music!—What fine air
Was that you praised last night?—"The Widow Jones!"
A country jig they've turn'd into a song.
You ask'd "if it had come from Italy?"
The lady blush'd, and held her peace, and then
You blush'd and said, "Perhaps it came from France!"
And then when blush'd the lady more, nor spoke,
You said, "At least it came from Germany!"
The air was English!—a true English air;
A downright English air!—a common air,
Old as "When Good King Arthur." Not a square,
Court, alley, street, or lane, about the town,
In which it is not whistled, play'd, or sung!
But you must have it come from Italy,
Or Germany, or France.—Go home! Go home!
To Lincolnshire, and mind thy dog and horn!
You'll never do for town! "The Widow Jones"
To come from Italy! Stay not in town,

Or you'll be married to the Widow Jones,
 Since you've forsworn, you say, the Widow Green!
 And morn and night they'll din your ears with her!
 "Well met, dear Master Wildrake.—A fine day!
 Pray, can you tell whence came the Widow Jones?"
 They love a jest in town!—To Lincolnshire!
 You'll never do for town!—To Lincolnshire!
 "The Widow Jones" to come from Italy! [*Goes out, laughing*
Wild. Confound the Widow Jones! 'Tis true! The air
 Well as the huntsman's triple mort I know,
 But knew not then indeed, 'twas so disguised
 With shakes and flourishes, outlandish things,
 That mar, not grace, an honest English song!
 Howe'er, the mischief's done! and as for her,
 She is either into hate or madness fallen.
 If madness, would she had her wits again,
 Or I my heart!—If hate—My love's undone!
 I'll give her up. I'll e'en to Master Truworth,
 Confess my treason—own my punishment—
 Take horse, and back again to Lincolnshire! [*Goes out.*
Con. [*Returning.*] Not here! I trust I have not gone too far!
 If he should quit the house! go out of town!
 Poor neighbour Wildrake! Little does he owe me!
 From childhood I've been used to plague him thus.
 Why would he fall in love, and spoil it all!
 I feel as I could cry! He has no right
 To marry any one! What wants he with
 A wife? Has he not plague enough in me?
 Would he be plagued with anybody else?
 Ever since we came to live in town I have felt
 The want of neighbour Wildrake! Not a soul
 Besides I care to quarrel with; and now
 He goes and gives himself to another!—What!
 Am I in love with neighbour Wildrake?—No.
 I only would not have him marry—Marry?
 Sooner I'd have him dead than have him marry!

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Master Waller's House.*

Enter ALICE, hastily.

Alice. [*Speaking to the outside.*] Fly, Stephen, to the door!
 your rapier! quick!—
 Our master is beset, because of one
 Whose part he takes—a maid, whom lawless men
 Would lawlessly entreat! In what a world

We live! I shake from head to foot!—How well
[Looking out of window.]

He lays about him, and his other arm
 Engaged, in charge of her whom he defends—
 A damsel worth a broil!—Now Stephen, now!
 Take off the odds, brave lad, and turn the scale!
 I would I were a swordsman! How he makes
 His rapier fly! Well done!—O heaven, there's blood,
 But on the side that's wrong!—Well done, good Stephen!
 Pray Heaven no life be ta'en!—Lay on, brave lad!
 He has mark'd his man again! Good lad—Well done,
 I pray no mischief come!—Press on him, Stephen!
 Now gives he ground—Follow thy advantage up!
 Allow no pause for breath!—Hit him again!
 Forbid it end in death!—Lounge home, good Stephen!
 How fast he now retreats!—That spring, I'll swear,
 Was answer to thy point!—Well fenced!—Well fenced!
 Now Heaven forefend it end in death!—He flies!
 And from his comrade, the same moment, hath
 Our master jerk'd his sword.—The day is ours!
 Quick may they get a surgeon for their wounds,
 And I, a cordial for my flutter'd spirits:
 I vow, I'm nigh to swoon!

Wal. *[without].*—Hoa! Alice! Hoa!
 Open the door! Quick, Alice! Quick!

Alice. Anon!
 Young joints take little thought of aged ones,
 But fancy them as supple as their own.

Wal. Alice!

Alice. *[Opening the door.]* I'm here! A mercy!—Is she dead?

Enter MASTER WALLER, bearing LYDIA, fainting.

Wal. No!—She but faints—A chair!—Quick, Alice, quick!
 Water to bathe her temples. *[ALICE goes out.]* Such a turn
 Kind fortune never did me! Shall I kiss
 To life these frozen lips?—No!—Of her plight
 'Twere base to take advantage! *[ALICE returns, &c.]* All is
 well,
 The blood returns.

Alice. How wondrous fair she is!

Wal. Thou think'st her so?—No wonder then should I.
 How say you?—Wondrous fair? *[Aside.]*

Alice. Yes; wondrous fair!
 Harm never come to her! So sweet a thing
 'Twere pity were abused!

Wal. You think her fair?

Alice. Ay, marry! Half so fair were more than match
 For fairest she mine eyes e'er saw before!
 And what a form! A foot and instep there!
 Vouchers of symmetry! A little foot
 And rising instep, from an ankle arching,
 A palm, and that a little one, might span.

Wal. Who taught thee thus?

Alice. Why who, but her, taught thee?

Thy mother!—Heaven rest her!—Thy good mother!—
She could read men and women by their hands
And feet!—And here's a hand!—A fairy palm!
Fingers that taper to the pinky tips,
With nails of rose, like shells of such a hue,
Berimm'd with pearl, you pick upon the shore!
Save these the gloss and colour wear, without.

Wal. Why, how thou talk'st!

Alice. Did I not tell thee thus
Thy mother used to talk? Such hand and foot,
She used to say, in man or woman vouch'd
For noble nature!—Sentiment refined;
Affections tender; apprehension quick—
Degrees beyond the generality!
There is a marriage finger! Curse the hand
Would balk it of a ring!

Wal. She's quite restored.

Leave us!—Why cast'st thou that uneasy look?
Why linger'st thou? I'm not alone with her.
My honour's with her too. I would not wrong her.

Alice. And if thou wouldst, thou'rt not thy mother's son. [Goes out.]

Wal. You are better?

Lydia. Much!—Much!

Wal. Know you him who durst
Attempt this violence, in open day?
It seem'd as he would force thee to his coach,
I saw attending.

Lydia. Take this letter, sir,
And send the answer—I must needs be gone.

Wal. [Throwing the letter away.] I read no letter! Tell
me, what of him
I saw offend thee?

Lydia. He hath often met me,
And by design I think, upon the street;
And tried to win mine ear, which ne'er he got
Except by bold enforcement. Presents—gifts—
Of jewels and of gold to wild amount,
To win an audience, hath he proffer'd me;
Until, methought, my silence—for my lips
Disdain'd reply where question was a wrong—
Had wearied him. O, sir! whate'er of life
Remains to me I had foregone, ere proved
The horror of this hour!—And you it is
That have protected me!

Wal. O speak not on't!

Lydia. You that have saved me from mine enemy!

Wal. I pray you to forget it.

Lydia. From a foe
More dire than he that threatens life with peril!

Wal. Sweet Lydia, I beseech you spare me!

Lydia. No!

I will not spare you.—You have succour'd me,

You whom I fear worse than that baleful foe. *[Rises to go]*

Wal. *[Kneeling and snatching her hand.]* Lydia!

Lydia. Now, make thy bounty perfect. Drop

My hand. That posture which dishonours thee,

Quit!—for 'tis shame on shame to show respect

Where you design disgrace. Throw ope thy gate

And let me pass, and never seek with me;

By look, or speech, or aught, communion more!

Wal. Thou saidst thou lovedst me?

Lydia. Yes!—when I believed

My tongue was bidding thee its last adieu;

And now that I am sure it bids it thee—

For never must we speech exchange again—

Again, I tell it thee! Release me, sir!

Rise!—and no hindrance to my will oppose!

I must be free to go.

Wal. I cannot lose thee!

Lydia. Thou canst not have me!

Wal. No!

Lydia. Thou canst not. I

Repeat it.—Yet I'm thine—thine every way,

Except where honour fences!—Honour, sir,

Not property of gentle blood alone;

Of gentle blood not always property!

Thou'lt not obey me? Thou wouldst still detain me!

O what a contradiction is a man!

What in another he one moment spurns,

The next—he does, himself, complacently!

Wal. Wouldst have me lose the hand that holds my life?

Lydia. Hear me and keep it, if thou art a man!

I love thee—for thy benefit would give

The labour of that hand!—wear out my feet!—

Rack the invention of my mind!—the feeling

Of my heart in one volition concentrate!—

My life expend, and think I paid no more

Than he who wins a priceless gem for thanks!

For such good-will canst thou return me wrong?

Wal. Yet, for a while, I cannot let thee go.

Propound for me an oath, that I'll not wrong thee—

An oath, which, if I break it, will entail

Forfeit of earth and heaven. I'll take it—so.

Thou stay'st one hour with me!

Lydia. No!—Not one moment!

Unhand me, or I shriek!—I know the summons

Will pierce into the street, and set me free!

I stand in peril while I'm near thee! She

Who knows her danger, and delays escape,

Hath but herself to thank, whate'er befalls!

Sir, I may have a woman's weakness, but

I have a woman's resolution, too,
And that's a woman's strength! One moment more!—

Wal. Lo! Thou art free to go!

[*Rises, and throws himself distractedly into a chair.*
LYDIA approaches the door—her pace slackens—she pauses with her hand upon the lock—turns, and looks earnestly on WALLER.

Lydia. I have a word.

To say to thee; if, by thy mother's honour,
Thou swear'st to me thou wilt not quit thy seat.

Wal. Yea! by my mother's honour.

Lydia. [*After a pause, bursting into tears.*] Why, O why—
Why have you used me thus? See what you have done
Essay'd to light a guilty passion up,
And kindled in its stead a holy one!

For I do love thee!—Know'st thou not the wish
To find desert will bring it oft to sight
Where yet it is not? so, for substance, passes
What only is a phantasm of the mind!

I fear'd thy love was guilty—yet my wish
To find it honest, stronger than my fear,
My fear with fatal triumph overthrew!

Now hope and fear give up to certainty,
And I must fly thee—yet must love thee still!

Wal. Lydia! by all—

Lydia. I pray you hear me out!
Was it right? was it generous? was it pitiful?
One way or other I might be undone:

To love with sin—or love without a hope!

Wal. Yet hear me, Lydia!—

Lydia. Stop! I am undone!
A maid without a heart—robb'd of the soil,
Wherein life's hopes and wishes root and spring,

And thou the foe that did me so much wrong,
And vow'd me so much love!—But I forgive thee!

Yea, and I do bless thee! [*Rushing up and sinking at his feet.*
Recollect thy oath!—

Or in thy heart lodged never germ of honour,
But 'tis a desert all!

[*She kisses his hand—presses it to her heart, and kisses it again.*

And now farewell to thee! [*Rises.*
Mayst thou be happy! [*Going.*

Wal. Wouldst insure the thing
Thou wishest?

[*She moves towards the door with a gesture that prohibits further converse.*

Stop! [*She continues to move on.*

O sternly resolute! [*She still moves.*

I mean thee honour! [*She stops and turns towards him.*

Thou dost meditate—

I know it—flight. Give me some pause for thought,

But to confirm a mind almost made up.
 If in an hour thou hear'st not from me, then
 Think me a friend far better lost than won!
 Wilt thou do this?

Lydia. I will.

Wal. An hour decides. *[They go out severally.]*

SCENE II.—*A Room in Sir William Fondlove's House.*

Enter WILDRAKE and TRUEWORTH.

Wild. You are not angry?

True. No; I knew the service
 I sent you on was one of danger.

Wild. Thank you.

Most kind you are—And you believe she loves me:

And your own hopes give up to favour mine.

Was ever known such kindness! Much I fear

'Twill cost you.

True. Never mind! I'll try and bear it.

Wild. That's right. No use in yielding to a thing
 Resolve does wonders! Shun the sight of her—

See other women!—Fifty to be found

As fair as she.

True. I doubt it.

Wild. Doubt it not.

Doubt nothing that gives promise of a cure.

Right handsome dames there are in Lancashire,

Whence call'd their women, witches!—witching things!

I know a dozen families in which

You'd meet a courtesy worthy of a bow.

I'll give you letters to them.

True. Will you?

Wild. Yes.

True. The worth of a disinterested friend!

Wild. O Master Truworth, deeply I'm your debtor

I own I die for love of neighbour Constance!

And thou to give her up for me! Kind friend!

What won't I do for thee?—Don't pine to death!

I'll find thee fifty ways to cure thy passion,

And make thee heart-whole, if thou'rt so resolved.

Thou shalt be master of my sporting stud,

And go a hunting. If that likes thee not,

Take up thy quarters at my shooting lodge;

There is a cellar to't—make free with it.

I'll thank thee if thou emptiest it. The song

Gives out that wine feeds love—It drowns it, man!

If thou wilt neither hunt nor shoot, try games;

Play at loggats, bowls, fives, dominoes, draughts, cribbage,

Backgammon—special recipes for love!

And you believe, for all the hate she shows,

That neighbour Constance loves me?

True. 'Tis my thought.

Wild. How shall I find it out?

True. Affect to love.

Another. Say your passion thrives; the day
Is fix'd; and pray her undertake the part
Of bridemaid to your bride. 'Twill bring her out.

Wild. You think she'll own her passion?

True. If she loves.

Wild. I thank thee! I shall try it! Master Truworth,
What shall I say to thee, to give her up,
And love her so?

True. Say nothing.

Wild. Noble friend!

Kind friend! Instruct another man the way
To win thy mistress! Thou'lt not break my heart?
Take my advice, thou shalt not be in love
A month! Frequent the play-house!—Walk the Park!
I'll think of fifty ladies that I know,
Yet can't remember now—enchancing ones!
And then there's Lancashire!—and I have friends
In Berkshire and in Wiltshire, that have swarms
Of daughters! Then my shooting-lodge and stud!
I'll cure thee in a fortnight of thy love!
And now to neighbour Constance—yet almost
I fear accosting her—a hundred times
Have I essay'd to break my mind to her,
But still she stops my mouth with restless scorn!
Howe'er, thy scheme I'll try, and may it thrive!
For I am sick for love of neighbour Constance.
Farewell, dear Master Truworth! Take my counsel—
Conquer thy passion! Do so! Be a man! [*Goes out.*]

True. Feat, easy done, that does not tax ourselves!

Enter PHOEBE.

Phoebe. A letter, sir.

True. Good sooth, a roaming one,

And yet slow traveller. This should have reach'd me
In Lombardy.—The hand! Give way, weak seal,
Thy feeble let too strong for my impatience!
Ha! Wrong'd!—Let me contain myself!—Compell'd
To fly the roof that gave her birth!—My sister!
No partner in her flight but her pure honour!
I am again a brother.—Pillow, board,
I know not till I find her.

Enter WALLER.

Wal. Master Truworth!

True. Ha! Master Waller! Welcome, Master Waller.

Wal. Good Master Truworth, thank you. Finding you
From home, I e'en made bold to follow you,
For I esteem you as a man, and fain
Would benefit by your kind offices.

But let me tell you first, to your reproof,
I am indebted more than e'er I was
To praise of any other! I am come, sir,
To give you evidence I am not one.

Who owns advice is right, and acts not on't.

True. Pray you explain.

Wal. Will you the bearer be
Of this to one, has cause to thank you, too;
Though I the larger debtor?—Read it, sir.

True. [*Reading the letter.*] "At morn-to-morrow I shall
make you mine;

Will you accept from me the name of wife,
The name of husband give me in exchange?"

Wal. How say you, sir?

True. 'Tis boldly—nobly done!

Wal. If she consents—which affectation 'twere
To say I doubt—bid her prepare for church,
And you shall act the father, sir, to her
You did the brother by.

True. Right willingly.

Though matter of high moment I defer,
Mind, heart, and soul, are all enlisted in!

Wal. May I implore you, haste! A time is set!—
How light an act of duty makes the heart!

[*They go out together.*]

SCENE III.—*Another Chamber in Sir William's House.*

CONSTANCE *discovered.*

Con. I'll pine to death for no man! Wise it were,
Indeed, to die for neighbour Wildrake—No!—
I know the duty of a woman, better—
What fits a maid of spirit! I am out
Of patience with myself, to cast a thought
Away upon him. Hang him! Lovers cost
Nought but the pains of luring. I'll get fifty,
And break the heart of every one of them!
I will! I'll be the champion of my sex,
And take revenge on shallow, fickle man,
Who gives his heart to fools, and slights the worth
Of proper women! I suppose she's handsome!
My face 'gainst hers, at hazard of mine eyes!
A maid of mind! I'll talk her to a stand,
Or tie my tongue for life! A maid of soul!—
An artful, managing, dissembling one,
Or she had never caught him!—He's no man
To fall in love himself, or long ago,
I warrant he had fall'n in love with me!
I hate the fool!—I do! Ha, here he comes.
What brings him hither?—Let me dry my eyes:

He must not see I have been crying. Hang him,
I have much to do, indeed, to cry for him!

Enter WILDRAKE.

Wild. Your servant, neighbour Constance.

Con. Servant, sir!

Now what, I wonder, comes the fool to say,
Makes him look so important?

Wild. Neighbour Constance,

I am a happy man.

Con. What makes you so?

Wild. A thriving suit.

Con. In Chancery?

Wild. O no!

In love.

Con. O, true! You are in love! Go on!

Wild. Well, as I said, my suit's a thriving one.

Con. You mean you are beloved again!—I don't
Believe it.

Wild. I can give you proof.

Con. What proof?

Love-letters? She's a shameless maid

To write them! Can she spell? Ay, I suppose

With prompting of a dictionary!

Wild. Nay

Without one.

Con. I will lay you ten to one

She cannot spell! How know you she can spell?

You cannot spell yourself! You write command

With a single M—C—O—M—A—N—D:

Yours to Co-mand.

Wild. I did not say she wrote
Love-letters to me.

Con. Then she suffers you to press

Her hand, perhaps?

Wild. She does.

Con. Does she press yours?

Wild. She does.—It goes on swimmingly!

[*Aside.*

Con. She does!

She is no modest woman! I'll be bound,

Your arm the madam suffers round her waist?

Wild. She does!

Con. She does! Outrageous forwardness!

Does she let you kiss her?

Wild. Yes.

Con. She should be——

Wild. What?

Con. What you got thrice your share of when at school,
And yet not half your due! A brazen face!

More could not grant a maid about to wed.

Wild. She is so.

Con. What?

Wild. How swimmingly it goes ! *[Aside.]*

Con. *[With suppressed impatience.]* Are you about to marry, neighbour Wildrake ?

Are you about to marry ?

Wild. Excellent. *[Aside.]*

Con. *[Breaking out.]* Why don't you answer me ?

Wild. I am.

Con. You are—

I tell you what, sir—You're a fool !

Wild. For what ?

Con. You are not fit to marry. Do not know Enough of the world, sir ! Have no more experience, Thought, judgment, than a schoolboy ! Have no mind

Of your own !—Your wife will make a fool of you,

Will jilt you, break your heart ! I wish she may,

I do ! You have no more business with a wife

Than I have ! Do you mean to say, indeed,

You are about to marry ?

Wild. Yes, indeed.

Con. And when ?

Wild. I'll say to-morrow !

[Aside.]

Con. When, I say ?

Wild. To-morrow.

Con. Thank you ! much beholden to you !

You've told me on't in time ! I'm very much

Beholden to you, neighbour Wildrake !—And,

I pray you, at what hour ?

Wild. That we have left

For you to name.

Con. For me !

Wild. For you.

Con. Indeed !

You're very bountiful ! I should not wonder

Meant you I should be bridemaids to the lady !

Wild. 'Tis just the thing I mean !

Con. *[Furiously.]* The thing you mean !

Now pray you, neighbour, tell me that again,

And think before you speak ; for much I doubt

You know what you are saying. Do you mean

To ask me to be bridemaids ?

Wild. Even so.

Con. Bridemaids ?

Wild. Ay, bridemaids !—It is coming fast

Unto a head.

Con. And 'tis for me you wait

To fix the day ? It shall be doomsday then !

Wild. Be doomsday ?

Con. Doomsday !

Wild. Wherefore doomsday ?

Con. Wherefore !—

Go ask your bride, and give her that for me.

Look, neighbour Wildrake ! you may think this strange,

[Boxes him]

But don't misconstrue it! For you are vain, sir!
 And may put down, for love, what comes from hate.
 I should not wonder, thought you I was jealous;
 But I'm not jealous, sir!—would scorn to be so
 Where it was worth my while—I pray henceforth
 We may be strangers, sir!—you will oblige me
 By going out of town. I should not like
 To meet you on the street, sir. Marry, sir!
 Marry to-day! The sooner, sir, the better!
 And may you find you have made a bargain, sir.
 As for the lady!—much I wish her joy.
 I pray you send no bride-cake, sir, to me!
 Nor gloves—If you do, I'll give them to my maid!
 Or throw them into the kennel—or the fire.
 I am your most obedient servant, sir! [Goes out.
Wild. She is a riddle, solve her he who can! [Goes out.

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—A Room in Sir William Fondlove's.

SIR WILLIAM seated with two Lawyers.

Sir Wil. How many words you take to tell few things,
 Again, again say over what, said once,
 Methinks were told enough!

First Lawyer. It is the law,
 Which labours at precision.

Sir Wil. Yes; and thrives
 Upon uncertainty—and makes it, too,
 With all its pains to shun it. I could bind
 Myself, methinks, with but the twentieth part
 Of all this cordage, sirs.—But every man,
 As they say, to his own business. You think
 The settlement is handsome?

First Lawyer. Very, sir.

Sir Wil. Then now, sirs, we have done, and take my thanks,
 Which, with your charges, I shall render you
 Again to-morrow.

First Lawyer. Happy nuptials, sir! [Lawyers go out.

Sir Wil. Who passes there? Hoa! send my daughter to me,
 And Master Wildrake too! I wait for them.
 Bold work!—Without her leave to get the license,
 Prepare the clergyman and wait upon her
 To carry her to church!—'Tis taking her
 By storm! What else could move her yesterday
 But jealousy? What causes jealousy

But love? She's mine the moment she receives
Conclusive proof, like this, that heart and soul,
And mind and person, I am all her own!
Heigh ho! These soft alarms are very sweet,
Yet tantalizing too! Ha! Master Wildrake,

Enter WILDRAKE.

I am glad you're ready, for I'm all in arms
To bear the widow off. Come! Don't be sad;
All must go merrily, you know, to-day!—
She still makes jest of him, I see! The girl
Affects him not, and Truworth is at fault,
Though clear it is that he is dying for her. [*Aside.*
Well, daughter?—So I see you're ready too.

Enter CONSTANCE.

Why, what's amiss with thee?

Phoebe. [Entering.] The coach is here.

Sir Wil. Come, Wildrake, offer her your arm.

Con. [To WILDRAKE.] I thank you!

I am not an invalid!—can use my limbs!

He knows not how to make an arm, befits

A lady lean upon.

Sir Wil. Why, teach him then.

Con. Teach him! Teach Master Wildrake! Teach indeed!

I taught my dog to beg, because I knew

That he could learn it.

Sir Wil. Peace, thou little shrew!

I'll have no wrangling on my wedding-day!

Here, take my arm.

Con. I'll not!—I'll walk to the coach!

Alone live, die alone! I do execrate

The fool and all his sex!

Sir Wil. Again!

Con. I have done.

When do you marry, Master Wildrake? She

Will want a spouse, who goes to church with thee!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*Widow Green's Dressing-room.*

WIDOW GREEN *discovered at her Toilet, attended by AMELIA,*
WALLER'S Letter to LYDIA in her hand.

W. Green. O bond of destiny!—Fair bond, that seal'st
My fate in happiness!—I'll read thee yet
Again—although thou'rt written on my heart.
But here he laid his hand, inditing thee!
And this the tracing of his fingers! So
I read thee, that could rhyme thee, as my prayers!

"At morn to-morrow I will make you mine.
 Will you accept from me the name of wife—
 The name of husband give me in exchange?"
 The traitress! to break ope my billet-doux,
 And take the envelope!—But I forgive her,
 Seeing she left the rich contents behind!
 Amelia, give this feather more a slope,
 That it sit droopingly. I would look all
 Dissolvement, nought about me to bespeak
 Boldness! I would appear a timid bride,
 Trembling upon the verge of wifehood, as
 I ne'er before had stood there! That will do.
 O dear!—How agitated am I—Don't
 I look so? I have found a secret out,—
 Nothing in women strikes a man so much
 As to look interesting! Hang this cheek
 Of mine! 'Tis too saucy; what a pity
 To have a colour of one's own!—Amelia!
 Could you contrive, dear girl, to bleach my cheek,
 How I would thank you! I could give it then
 What tint I chose, and that should be the hectic
 Which speaks a heart in delicate commotion!
 I am much too florid! Stick a rose in my hair,
 The brightest you can find, 'twill help, my girl,
 Subdue my rebel colour—Nay, the rose
 Loses complexion, not my cheek! Exchange it
 For a carnation. That's the flower, Amelia!
 You clearly see it triumphs o'er my cheek.
 Are you content with me?

Amelia. I am, my lady.

W. Green. And whither, think you, has the hussy gone,
 Whose place you fill so well?—Into the country?
 Or fancy you she stops in town?

Amelia. I can't
 Conjecture.

W. Green. Shame upon her!—Leave her place
 Without a moment's warning!—with a man too!
 Seem'd he a gentleman that took her hence?

Amelia. He did.

W. Green. You never saw him here before?

Amelia. Never.

W. Green. Not lounging on the other side
 Of the street; and reconnoitering the windows?

Amelia. Never.

W. Green. 'Twas plann'd by letter. Notes, you know,
 Have often come to her—But I forgive her,
 Since this advice she chanced to leave behind
 Of gentle Master Waller's wishes, which
 I bless myself in blessing!—Gods, a knock!
 'Tis he! Show in those friends who are so kind
 To act my bridemaids for me on this brief
 And agitating notice! [*AMELIA goes out.*] Yes, I look

A bride sufficiently! And this the hand
That gives away my liberty again!
Upon my life it is a pretty hand,
A delicate and sentimental hand!
No lotion equals gloves; no woman knows
The use of them that does not sleep in them!
My neck hath kept its colour wondrously!
Well; after all it is no miracle
That I should win the heart of a young man.
My bridesmaids come!—O dear!

Enter two Ladies.

First Lady. How do you, love? A kind good morning to
you! Little dear,
How much you are affected! Why we thought
You ne'er would summon us.

W. Green. One takes, you know,
When one is flurried, twice the time to dress.
My dears, has either of you salts? I thank you!
They are excellent; the virtue's gone from mine,
Nor thought I of renewing them.—Indeed,
I'm unprovided, quite, for this affair.

First Lady. I think the bridegroom's come!

W. Green. Don't say so! How
You've made my heart jump!

First Lady. As you sent for us,
A new-launch'd carriage drove up to the door;
The servants all in favours.

W. Green. 'Pon my life,
I never shall get through it; lend me your hand.

[Half rises, and throws herself back on her chair again.]
I must sit down again! There came just now
A feeling like to swooning over me.

I am sure before 'tis over I shall make
A fool of myself! I vow I thought not half
So much of my first wedding-day! I'll make
An effort! Let me lean upon your arm,
And give me yours, my dear. Amelia, mind
Keep near me with the smelling-bottle.

Servant. *[Entering.]* Madam,
The bridegroom's come.

[Goes out.]

W. Green. The brute has knock'd me down!

To bolt it out so! I had started less
If he had fired a cannon at my ear.
How shall I ever manage to hold up
Till all is done! I shake from head to foot!

You can excuse me, can't you?—Pity me!

One may feel queer upon one's wedding-day. *[They go out.]*

SCENE THE LAST.—*A Drawing-room.*

Enter Servants, showing in SIR WILLIAM FONDLOVE, CONSTANCE, and MASTER WILDRAKE—Servants go out again.

Sir Wil. [*Aside to WILDRAKE.*] Good Master Wildrake, look more cheerfully!—Come, You do not honour to my wedding-day! How brisk am I! My body moves on springs! My stature gives no inch I throw away; My supple joints play free and sportfully; I'm every atom what a man should be.

Wild. I pray you pardon me, Sir William!

Sir Wil. Smile then, And talk and rally me! Why, I expected, Ere half an hour had pass'd, you would have put me A dozen times to the blush. Without such things, A bridegroom knows not his own wedding-day! I see! Her looks are glossary to thine! She flouts thee still, I marvel not at thee; There's thunder in that cloud! I would to-day It would disperse, and gather in the morning. I fear me much thou know'st not how to woo. I'll give thee a lesson. Ever there's a way, But knows one how to take it? Twenty men Have courted Widow Green. Who has her now? I sent to advertise her that to-day I meant to marry her. She wouldn't open My note. And gave I up? I took the way To make her love me! Straight I sent, again, To pray her leave my daughter should be bridemaid. That letter too came back. Did I give up? I took the way to make her love me! Yet, Again, I sent to ask what church she chose To marry at; my note came back again; And did I yet give up? I took the way To make her love me. All the while I found She was preparing for the wedding. Take A hint from me! She comes! My fluttering heart Gives note the empress of its realms is near. Now, Master Wildrake, mark and learn from me How it behoves a bridegroom play his part.

Enter WIDOW GREEN, supported by her Bridemaids, and followed by AMELIA.

W. Green. I cannot raise my eyes—they cannot bear The beams of his, which, like the sun's, I feel Are on me, though I see them not, enlightening The heaven of his young face; nor dare I scan The brightness of his form, which symmetry

And youth and beauty, in enriching, vie.
He kneels to me! Now grows my breathing thick,
As though about to hear a seraph's voice,
Too rich for mortal ear!

Sir Wil. My gentle bride!

W. Green. Who's that?—who speaks to me?

Sir Wil. These transports check.

Lo, an example to mankind I set
Of amorous emprise; and who should thrive,
In love, if not Love's soldier, who still presses
The doubtful siege, and will not own repulse?

Lo! here I tender thee my fealty,
To live thy duteous slave. My queen thou art,
In frowns or smiles, to give me life or death.

Oh, deign look down upon me! In thy face

Alone I look on day! It is my sun

Most bright; the which denied, all is night.

Shine out upon me, my divinity!

My gentle Widow Green!—My wife to be!

My love, my life, my drooping, blushing bride!

W. Green. Sir William Fondlove, you're a fool!

Sir Wil. A fool!

W. Green. Why come you hither, sir, in trim like this?
Or rather why at all?

Sir Wil. Why come I hither?

To marry thee!

W. Green. The man will drive me mad!

Sir William Fondlove, I'm but forty, sir,

And you are sixty, seventy, if a day;

At least you look it, sir. I marry you!

When did a woman wed her grandfather?

Sir Wil. Her brain is turn'd!

W. Green. You're in your dotage, sir,

And yet a boy in vanity! But know

Yourself from me: you are old and ugly, sir.

Sir Wil. Do you deny you are in love with me?

W. Green. In love with thee!

Sir Wil. That you are jealous of me?

W. Green. Jealous!

Sir Wil. To very lunacy!

W. Green. To hear him!

Sir Wil. Do you forget what happen'd yesterday?

W. Green. Sir William Fondlove!

Sir Wil. Widow Green, fair play!

Are you not laughing? Is it not a jest;

Do you believe me seventy to a day?

Do I look it? Am I old and ugly? Why,

Why do I see those favours in the hall,

These ladies dress'd as bridemaids, thee as bride,

Unless to marry me?

[Knock.

W. Green. He is coming, sir,
Shall answer you for me!

Enter WALLER, with Gentlemen as Bridemen.

Wal. Where is she? What!

All that bespeaks the day, except the fair
That's queen of it? Most kind of you to grace
My nuptials so! But that I render you
My thanks in full, make full my happiness,
And tell me where's my bride?

W. Green. She's here.

Wal. Where?

W. Green. Here,
Fair Master Waller!

Wal. Lady, do not mock me!

W. Green. Mock thee! My heart is stranger to such mood,
'Tis serious tenderness and duty all.

I pray you mock not me, sir, for I do strive
With fears and soft emotions that require
Support. Take not away my little strength,
And leave me at the mercy of a feather.

I am thy bride! If 'tis thy happiness
To think me so, believe it, and be rich
To thy most boundless wishes! Master Waller,
I am thy waiting bride, the Widow Green!

Wal. Lady, no widow is the bride I seek,
But one the church has never given yet
The nuptial blessing to!

W. Green. What mean you, sir?

Why come a bridegroom here, if not to me
You sued to be your bride? Is this your hand, sir?

[Showing letter.]

Wal. It is! address'd to your fair waiting-maid.

W. Green. My waiting-maid! The laugh is passing round,
And now the turn is yours, sir. She is gone!—
Eloped!—run off!—and with the gentleman
That brought your billet-doux.

Wal. Is Truworth false?

He must be false! What madness tempted me
To trust him with such audience as I knew
Must sense, and mind, and soul of man entrance,
And leave him but the power to own its spell!
Of his own lesson he would profit take,
And plead at once an honourable love,
Supplanting mine, less pure, reform'd too late!
And if he did, what merit I, except
To lose the maid I would have wrongly won;
And, had I rightly prized her, now had worn?
I get but my deservings!

*Enter TRUEWORTH, leading in LYDIA, richly dressed, and veiled
from head to foot.*

Master Truworth,
Though for thy treachery thou hast excuse,

Thou must account for it; so much I lose!
 Sir, you have wrong'd me to amount beyond
 Acres, and gold;—and life, which makes them rich!
 And compensation I demand of you,
 Such as a man expects, and none but one
 That's less than man refuses! Where's the maid
 Thou, falsely, hast abducted?

True. I took her hence,
 But not by guile, nor yet enforcement, sir;
 But of her free will, knowing what she did.
 That, as I found, I cannot give her back,
 I own! Her state is changed; but in her place
 This maid I offer you, her image far
 As feature, form, complexion, nature go!
 Resemblance halting, only there, where thou
 Thyself didst pause,—condition; for this maid
 Is gently born and generously bred.
 Lo! for your fair loss, fair equivalent!

Wal. Show me another sun, another earth
 I can inherit, as this Sun and Earth!
 The maid herself restore, as hence she went—
 The world can't find me her equivalent.
 Give back! herself, her sole equivalent!

True. Her sole equivalent I offer you!
 My sister, sir, long counted lost, now found;
 Who fled her home unwelcome bands to 'scape,
 Which a half-father would have forced upon her,
 Taking advantage of her brother's absence
 Away on travel in a distant land.
 Return'd, I miss'd her; of the cause received
 Invention, coward; false and criminating!
 And gave her up for lost; but happily
 Lit on her, yesterday—Behold her, sir! [Removes veil.]

Wal. Lydia!

W. Green. My waiting-maid!

Wal. Thy sister, Truworth!
 Art thou fit brother to this virtuous maid?

True. [Giving LYDIA to WALLER.] Let this assure thee.

Lydia. [To WIDOW GREEN.] Madam, pardon me
 My double character, for honesty,
 No other end, assumed—and my concealment
 Of Master Waller's love. In all things else
 I trust I may believe you hold me blameless;
 At least, I'll say for you, I should be so,
 For it was pastime, madam, not a task,
 To wait upon you! Little you exacted,
 And ever made the most of what I did
 In mere obedience to you!

W. Green. Give me your hand;
 No love without a little roguery.
 If well you play the mistress as the maid,
 You will bear off the bell! There never was

A better girl!—I have made myself a fool.
 I am undone, if goes the news abroad.
 I donn'd my wedding dress for no effect
 Except to put it off! I must be married.
 I'm a lost woman, if another day
 I go without a husband!—What a sight
 He looks by Master Waller!—Yet he is physio
 I die without, so needs must gulp it down.
 I'll swallow him with what good grace I can—
 Sir William Fondlove!

Sir Wil. Widow Green!

W. Green. I own

I have been rude to you. Thou dost not look
 So old by thirty, forty, years as now
 I said. Thou'rt far from ugly—very far!
 And as I said, Sir William, once before,
 Thou art a kind and right good-humour'd man:
 I was but angry with you! Why, I'll tell you
 At more convenient season—and you know
 An angry woman heeds not what she says,
 And will say anything!

Sir Wil. I were unworthy
 The name of man, if an apology,
 So gracious, came off profitless, and from
 A lady! Will you take me, Widow Green?

W. Green. Hem!

True. [*To WILDRAKE.*] Master Wildrake dress'd to go to church!

She has acknowledged, then, she loves thee?—No?
 Give me thy hand, I'll lead thee up to her.

Wild. 'Sdeath! what are you about? You know her not.
 She'll brain thee!

True. Fear not!—Come along with me.
 Fair Mistress Constance!

Con. Well, sir!

Wild. [*To TRUEWORTH.*] Mind!

True. Don't fear.

Love you not neighbour Wildrake?

Con. Love, sir!

True. Yes,

You do!

Con. He loves another, sir; he does;
 I hate him! We were children, sir, together,
 For fifteen years and more; there never came
 The day we did not quarrel, make it up,
 Quarrel again, and make it up again:
 Were never neighbours more like neighbours, sir.
 Since he became a man, and I a woman,
 It still has been the same; nor cared I ever
 To give a frown to any other, sir.
 And now to come and tell me he's in love,
 And ask me to be bridemaid to his bride!

How durst he do it, sir!—To fall in love!
Methinks at least he might have ask'd my leave,
Nor had I wonder'd had he ask'd myself, sir!

Wild. Then give thyself to me!

Con. How! what!

Wild. Be mine;

Thou art the only maid thy neighbour loves.

Con. Art serious, neighbour Wildrake?

Wild. In the church

I'll answer thee, if thou wilt take me; though

I neither dress, nor walk, nor dance, nor know

"The Widow Jones" from an Italian, French,

Or German air.

Con. No more of that.—My hand.

Wild. Givest it as free as thou didst yesterday?

Con. [*Affecting to strike him.*] Nay!

Wild. I will thank thee, give it how thou wilt.

W. Green. A triple wedding! May the Widow Green
Obtain brief hearing e'er she quits the scene,
The Love-Chase to your kindness to commend
In favour of an old, now absent, friend!

END OF THE LOVE-CHASE.



1854

WOMAN'S WIT;

OR,

Love's Disguises.

A PLAY.

TO SAMUEL ROGERS,

This Play

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN, IN 1838.)

<i>Lord Athunree</i>	MR. WARDE.
<i>Sir Valentine de Grey</i>	MR. ANDERSON.
<i>Sir William Sutton</i>	MR. BARTLEY.
<i>Walsingham</i>	MR. MACREADY.
<i>Bradford</i>	MR. WALDRON.
<i>Felton</i>	MR. PRITCHARD.
<i>Monsieur de l'Epée</i>	MR. TILBURY.
<i>Clever</i>	MR. HARLEY.
<i>Lewson</i>	MR. DIDDEAR.
<i>Sir William Sutton's Servant</i>	MR. HOLMES.
<i>Sir Valentine's Servant</i>	MR. COLLET.
<i>Officer</i>	MR. C. J. SMITH.
<i>Eustace</i>	MISS TAYLOR.
<i>Hero</i>	MISS H. FAUCIT.
<i>Emily</i>	MRS. SERLE.

WOMAN'S WIT;

OR,

LOVE'S DISGUISES.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Sir William Sutton's House.—An Ante-room leading to a Ball-room.—Music as of a Ball.—Dancers seen in the further Apartment.—Visitors passing in and out.*

Enter from the Ball-room, WALSINGHAM and BRADFORD.

Wal. Fair revels these, Sir William Sutton holds,
And all in honour of the city maid!
Sure the whole town is here, such swarms pass in
And out. Is it a match, as they report,
Betwixt the maid and brave Sir Valentine?

Brad. In prospect, sir; but, yet, I question much,
If in a year hence, nearer than to-day.
She with the lust for conquest is possess'd
Incontinently. Victory with her

Must follow victory. 'Tis strange so long
It pleased her that Lord Athunree should wear
The chains, Sir Valentine aspires to now.
Pity a maid with treasure past compare
Of gorgeous beauty, and with lands so broad,
Should use her riches with such huswifery,
As makes one pity her possession of them!

Wal. Lo you, she dances, and, for partner, takes
Lord Athunree, and not Sir Valentine.
A novel measure that! know you its name?

Brad. No!—Ay!—a liberal measure!—See!—his hand
Retains possession of her waist; while hers,
Nothing repelling, on his shoulder rests,
Permitting neighbourhood so close, embrace
Were scarce in privilege a jot beyond it!

Wal. You know Lord Athunree?—his character?—
The limits of my acquaintance.

Brad. No, sir.

Wal. Sir,
He is a libertine. He hath been much
Abroad. That dance, I will be bound, is ware
Of his importing. Yes; a libertine!

A man of pleasure—in the animal
 Ignoble sense of the term—that owns no curb
 Of honour, generosity, or ruth;
 Nor hath a single grace, except the nerve—
 A contradiction which would make one question
 That valour is, of itself, a thing to boast of—
 To vouch the wrong he does, and stand by it!

Brad. You say this feelingly.

Wal. Because I feel it.

I had a friend, whose heart could scarce lodge weal
 Or woe, without the privity of mine—
 A friend of quick affections—and a villain
 Compass'd the ruin of the maid he loved.
 That villain was the lord, who dances there!
 They fought—Through odds in skill, the honest arm
 Was master'd by the foul; but vengeance, though
 'Tis baffled, is not lost! Good morning; for
 More than an hour or twain, 'tis past the turn
 Of night.—Free thanks for your free converse with
 A stranger.

Brad. Sir, the like I render you:

But will you not delay some moments more?

In spirit, yet the revels are but young!

Wal. Sir, I am pall'd with them—and were I not,
 That lord approaches, and the sight of him
 Would put out keenest zest of joyance.

Brad. Have with you, then; far as our road is one,
 We'll go together.

Wal. Sir, right willingly! [They go out.]

Enter LORD ATHUNREE and FELTON.

Ath. 'Tis not for him, by sheer effrontery,
 For two years I have held the foremost place
 'Mongst swarms of lovers close besieging her!
 Made one and all to stand aloof, whene'er
 I thought they press'd too near!

Fel. I have marvell'd oft
 At your success.

Ath. Of blood-letting, you know,
 In the high mode, I have as little fear;
 As need of it; and would they come to that,
 I soon convinced them, that I knew their art
 Better than they did.

Fel. To say the truth, the foil
 Has stood you much in stead, when you required
 Weapon of graver practice.—Found you ever
 Your equal in the fence?

Ath. Ay; and my master!
 And therein do I tax my lucky stars,
 That watch not o'er me now. He is here in the house,
 That gentleman from travel late arrived,
 Who, with the gloss of the fair countries which

He has been seemg, shines, and quite puts out
All light of homely worth.

Fel. Sir Valentine?

Ath. The same;

That knight of France, though son of England. Ay,
And would-be captain too, to Venus, sir!

Would take the fortress, all who would carry which,
I at impracticable distance still

Have kept; yet come no nearer than I was
To winning it, when first set down before it.

Fel. Fear'st thou surrender then to him?

Ath. Humph! Fear?

That "fear"'s an ugly word! "Do I fear?" He is quick!

His point and eye together go! He marks

And hits, at once! His sword is part of him,

Part of his hand, sir, as his hand, of his wrist;

The very moment that your weapons touch,

He is here, and there, and in!—his lounge, a shot

You see not till 'tis home! We quarrell'd once,

And twice I felt him, ere a man could say

That he was well *en garde*—but touches, yet

Forerunners sure of heavier payment—so

I gave the battle up!—Yes, I do fear—

Save I have hit him, as I think I have,

Apart from lounge or parry!

Fel. Hit him! How?

Ath. I' the brain and heart, sir, without damage of

The skin! Through the eyes, sir, that take hit and hit,

And ne'er the worse, howe'er the practice tells

Within! He is a man of sentiment!

Sentiment, mark you!—that is, flesh and blood,

I' the summer cool as spring—or water, sir,

At the boiling point without a bubble—or wood

Without ignition in the heart of fire!

An ample span of forehead!—Mark!—a full

And liquid eye—free nostrils—crimson lips,

Cushioning one another without stint

Of the velvet—and a chin could show a copsis

Of beard—a man, sir, with all these, and yet

With wishes innocent as thoughts of babes!

A lie, sir, on the face of it!—yet such

He passes for unto himself—believes

Indeed he is, and so of others judges

Through the false colour of this self-delusion—

Particularly women. He would have them

Earth to himself—to all else, things of heaven!

Impassive to impression, as the air

Which man ne'er yet gave form or colour to!

Fel. Well?

Ath. Saw you not I danced with her just now?

Fel. Fair Hero?

Ath. Yes; I did dance with her a free

And liberal dance—the dance of contact, else
 Forbid—abandoning to the free hand
 The sacred waist! while face to face, till breath
 Kisses with breath, and eye embraces eye.
 Your trancéd coil relaxing, straightening, round
 And round in wavy measure, you entwine
 Circle with circle, till the swimming brain
 And panting heart in swoony lapse give o'er!

Fel. I know; that foreign dance thou, late, brought'st home.

Ath. The very same; I taught it her, and first
 Danced with her, to-night.

Fel. I had admired
 To see you.

Ath. Had you not, I had admired!
 The card-room kept you. Give you joy—You won!
 But to the dance. The evening half was out,
 And still he held her ear.

Fel. Sir Valentine?

Ath. Who else? who else that seat pre-eminent
 By her fair side had held in spite of me.
 I watch'd for my occasion, and it came.
 Some friend besought a moment's audience. Ere
 'Twas done, her waist was in my custody;
 Her white arm hanging from my shoulder, where
 Her hand, confiding, couch'd. "Your game goes well!"
 I whisper'd her; "Play boldly, and 'tis yours!"
 The measure this, to set the outline off!
 Give sway to thy rich figure! Abandon thee
 To the spirit of the dance! Let it possess thee!
 Float thee, as air were footing for thee! stud
 Thy cheeks with smiles of fire, and give thine eye
 The lightning's dazzling play! fix them on mine,
 That each may feed the other's, like to tongues.
 With converse, thick'ning converse!"

Fel. Well?—I see
 Thy drift!

Ath. Thou shouldst have seen the issue on't;—
 While, like a pupil at a task he loves,
 Whose aptitude with eager will outstrips
 His master's bidding, she was twenty times
 The thing I wish'd her! How she rose and sank
 With springy instep; while her yielding waist—
 Well as her waving neck, her beauteous head—
 Her falling shoulders, and round bust, show'd off!
 A world she look'd and moved of passionate
 Quick sense—of loveliness and joyousness—
 Of which, be sure, I pass'd the reigning lord!
 Nor with the dance did my dominion cease;
 But when her drooping lids, relaxéd steps,
 Disparted lips, and colour vanishing,
 Gave note she must give o'er—her languid form,
 Close girdled by my arm, her hand in mine,

Her cheek for pillow on my shoulder laid,
I led her to a couch, where courtesy
Of course admitted tendance!

Fel. What of him?

Ath. He is mad, sir! When he turn'd, and noted us,
He look'd as one who question'd his own eyes;
Then stood awhile—no doubt admiring how
Step did keep loving time, and how we moved
In closest neighbourhood, disparting but
To meet—her arm, a link, ne'er letting go!
Then with a start of sudden fury went,
And cast him on a seat with folded arms,
And knitted brows scanning us, as he wish'd
His eyes could do the office of the lightning.
I cared to mark no more—I saw the storm
I wish'd would come, was on; and knew 'twould hold!

Fel. And does it?

Ath. Yes; thrice she advances made—
As women know to make them, unobserved,
Except to practised eyes—to draw his notice.
Dropp'd her glove near him—wish'd she had a chair,
And one at his hand—complain'd of thirst, and just
A salver brought to him with wine—but all
In vain—right in his eyes display'd her form
In attitude of tender languishment—
And to no more account than offerings
Of gems before an idol made of stone!
But see; we have danced out the night, and day
With fresh and flushy vigour fast comes on;
You hear the rout breaks up. Attend him home;
Obtain his ear; know nothing, but be sure
Of slightest opportunity he gives
For her disparagement, to take advantage.
Here comes the Queen of the night, and all forlorn,
As she had lost her throne!

Enter HERO, leaning upon EMILY.

Emily. What miss you, Hero,
That thus you pause and turn; go on again,
And pause and turn again? Fear'st anything,
Thou hast forgot?

Hero. No! I have danced too much
To-night. The night before it was the same!
No rest—All revels!—Madness, with a frame
That is anything but iron. *[Turns to look back.*

Emily. There again!

I'm sure there's something that you miss—What is it?

Hero. My spirits only! Are not yours nigh wasted? *[Turns again.*

Ath. *[Aside to FELTON.]* She waits for him!—He saw her
home last night.

My life on't she must look for other squire.

Emily. Come.

Hero. Are they dancing yet?

Emily. What do you hear,
To make you ask? You're dreaming! Saw you not
That the musicians left the room before us,
And scarce a dozen laggards then remain'd,
Besides ourselves?

Hero. I know not what I saw,
I am tired—heart-tired—too tired to move or rest—
A weariness, won't let me go or stay!

Ath. He comes—accost him—ask him of the ball.

[*Aside to FELTON.*

Enter SIR VALENTINE.

Fel. See I Sir Valentine, the last of all
The revellers?

Sir Val. You see him, sir! 'Tis e'en
Sir Valentine.

Fel. Liked you the ball to-night?

Sir Val. Yes!—No!

Fel. What! Liked it, and disliked it?

Sir Val. Yes!

Fel. It was a very handsome ball.

Sir Val. It was.

Fel. What was amiss, then? Was the music bad?

Sir Val. The music far from bad!—most excellent!
Incomparably good—It were in place
In a concert-room,—I found no fault with the music.

Fel. Are you not fond of dancing, then?

Sir Val. I am—

Innocent pastime taken innocently
In honest mood!—But there are natures, sir,
That should eschew it—which 'tis pernicious to—
As wine, that's mirth to some, to some is madness!
I find no fault with dancing! 'Tis an act
Sets beauty off, proportion, grace—when these
Are too set off by modesty. For men—
And women more especially—of the vein
That's opposite, I'd have them lookers on—
For their own sakes first—next for the sake of those,
Who what they'd blush to do, lament to see
Enacted.

Fel. Was there any dance to-night
Offended you?

Sir Val. N—o, sir—I cannot say—
Perhaps there is no harm in any dance,
I am not sure—Some may give too much license—
Yet not so much, but e'en in such a case
By delicacy 'twill be carried off
Becomingly. I might perhaps object—
Yet where's the thing that can defy objection?
But this I say, sir, and to this I'll stand,

That modesty being to woman more
Than beauty—for, without it, beauty's cheap—
That woman, who can show her beauty off
Before her modesty, forgets herself,
And merits forfeit of that high respect,
Which noble minds would bear her!

Hero. [To EMILY.] What lady, can you tell me, danced
to-night
As lady should not dance?

Emily. I do not know.

Hero. [To FELTON.] Do you, sir?

Fel. No!

Hero. [To LORD ATHUNREE.] My lord, do you?

Ath. No, lady.

Hero. Perhaps some lady whom the gentleman
Danced with himself, and none, beside him, noted!

Sir Val. No lady, madam, 'twas that danced with me,
Who yields to me her hand shall never risk
Herself—at least by my o'erstepping. She
Shall find I know the honour that she does me;
See, in the freedom of the frolic measure,
My reverence for her sex attending her;
And then be handed to her seat again,
For mine own credit sake, if not for hers,
By all approved, as gracefully come off
In partnery of honest joyance!

No lady, madam, 'twas that danced with me.

Ath. The plague repay him for the lesson he
So freely reads me—in her presence too!

Hero. Wilt please you name the fair that gave offence?

Sir Val. 'Twere a presumptuous act for my poor tongue.
But if you know her, you must know her beauty;
Wherein I ne'er met fair to liken to her,
And that more fittingly shall name her for me.
A noble stature stopping there, where sex
Would have it reach, and bid it go no farther;
A head of antique mould, magnificent,
As may consist with softness and with sweetness;
Features, advertisement of thoughts and moods,
Wishes and fancies, such as it beseems
To lodge with chastity and tenderness
In sumptuous palace of rich loveliness;
And limbs of mould and act therewith consorting,
Making a paragon of symmetry!—
Gods, to such homeliness of use perverted,
As properties, to them were homeliness,
Should spurn to be applied to!

Emily. Are you ill,
That you turn pale?

Hero. Ill!—What should make me ill?
I could be angry, were it worth my while
At such disparagement of one, it seems

That's known to me,—but calumny is a thing
That blurs itself, and I should be despised,
Did I pay heed to!

Sir Val. Lady, you are right;
It shall be calumny—it *should* be so!
Vouchers so fair, should never be forsworn.
Alas for him, who is incredulous,
Yet would believe them rather far than doubt them!

[*SIR VALENTINE goes out, followed by FELTON.*]

Hero. A most strange gentleman!—An oddity!
I took him for a man of sense!—Didn't you?
A fanciful and churlish gentleman!
Looks sour because another man looks pleased!
Lord Athunree, wilt see my carriage brought
Close to the door before I venture out,
If not to tax your gallantry too much?

Ath. I fly to do it.

[*Goes out.*]

Hero. Let me weep a moment
Upon your neck—There! I am better now.
Are my eyes red?

Emily. Not much.

Hero. I will appear
To have been laughing! Laughter will bring tears.
Most excellent!—You should have kept it, though,
For another time! I have not strength to laugh!
As 'tis, I am so weak, I laugh and cry.

Re-enter ATHUNREE.

Lord Athunree, your courtesy has lost you
A most facetious story!

Ath. Tell it me.

Hero. Tell it you! Tell it! I am dead already
With hearing it, and must not hear't again,
Would I go home to-night! A little plague,
To make me laugh, and know that I should cry,
For lack of very strength.—Come, let us go!
A charming ball! Fair night—most happy night!
I'll find a time to make *you* cry with laughing.
A charming night—a very charming night.

[*To EMILY.*
They go out.]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the House of Monsieur de l'Epée.*

Enter, from an inner Room, WALSLINGHAM and MONSIEUR DE L'EPEE.

De l'Epée. Your progress answers to your practice, sir;
Cause have you none for discontent. Confess,

You play the foil with twice the ease you did
A month ago. Might I be credited,
Not only each new week, but even day,
Puts to the blush the former one, so fast
You catch the mystery of the fair art.

Wal. Yes; but my fellow-pupil heads me still.

De l'Epée. His quickness is your master.

Wal. Yet, 'tis strange!

With all my pains, I toil behind him still,
And he a very stripling!

De l'Epée. 'Tis not strength
That makes the odds, but art. To turn the foil
In practised hand, almost a wheaten straw
Hath stamina enough. The point deceived,
An infant's arm, in distance, lounges home.
The art is strength, and length, and everything.

Wal. To say the truth, it is a noble art,
On which agility and grace attend,
With proper manhood keeping company,
As on none other;—making lightest ease
To champion force, and, as you say, bear off
The palm from it. In every act and state—
Salute, guard, parry, feint, or pass—it hath
A bearing worthy of the eyes of kings
And their high consorts, when a practised hand
Like yours takes up the foil.

De l'Epée. You flatter, sir!

Wal. By my proud honour, no! But, to your pupil—
Who is he?

De l'Epée. I know not.

Wal. He is very young.

De l'Epée. Yes; by his looks he has a teen or twain
To count;—though never scholar study plied
With manlier resolve and constancy.
It often moves my wonder, that so slight
And delicate a frame should undergo
What, to robust mould, a thousand times
I have mark'd was weariness. Scarce lays he down
The foil, before he takes it up again,
Some parry, feint, or lounge, unmaster'd yet,
To practise;—which he does with zest so keen,
I have thought, at times, that in his fancy's eye
There stood, before his foil, an enemy,
The actor of some unatonéd wrong,
Whose heart each thrust was meant for.—A good morning!
I am waited for.

Wal. Good morning to you, sir. [DE L'EPÉE goes out.
A noble fellow that!—a soldier who
A mighty captain follow'd, for the strides
With which he led to glory—nay, for them
Deserted not, when fortune back'd a world,
Marshall'd against her off-cast favourite!

Talk you of scars?—That Frenchman bears on crown,
 Body, and limb, his vouchers, palpable,
 For many a thicket he has struggled through
 Of briery danger—wondering that he
 Came off with even life, when right and left
 His mates dropp'd thick beside him. A true man!
 His rations with his master gone—for he
 Was honour's soldier, that ne'er changes sides—
 He left his country for a foreign one,
 To teach his gallant art, and earn a home.
 I know him to be honest, generous,
 High-soul'd, and modest; every way a grace
 To the fine martial nation whence he sprang!*

EUSTACE enters from Inner Room.

My fellow-pupil! [*Aside.*] That was a shrewd guess
 The Frenchman made. Are all these pains to pay
 An enemy?—then is his case my own.
 Would I could gain his confidence! but still,
 Oft as I try, he foils me with reserve,
 He shows to none beside! One more attempt.—
 So, fellow-pupil! You have given o'er at last.
 Right well you fenced to-day! You are weary?

Eust. No.

Good morning, sir.—

Wal. I' faith, you "sir" not me!

We have been mates too long, methinks, for term,
 So niggard, fellow-pupil!—Walsingham
 Is my name. I prithee, when thou next accost'st me,
 Say Walsingham. Is't not enough, your foil
 Keeps me at distance—will not let me in—
 Rebukes me! shames me!—will you with your tongue
 O'erbear me too? Call me not "sir," I pray,
 But Walsingham.

Eust. It were to make too free
 For mere acquaintanceship.

Wal. Acquaintanceship!

You have known me for a year. Friendship has grown
 In half that time!

Eust. Friendship grows not by time.

Wal. In sooth 'twould seem so. Daily have we met
 For good a year—nor yet have shaken hands.
 Give me thy hand, and let us hence be friends!
 What! will you not? I' faith, you should—you shall!
 I'll take it spite of you—yea, though you frown,
 And call yourself my foe—which would be hard;
 To make a foe, striving to make a friend.

Eust. [*After a pause.*] I'll shake hands with you.

* This is a portrait. My brothers of Glasgow know and honour the gallant man who suggested it, and will judge how far it is a faithful one. At all events it is not flattered.

Wal. Ha!—a hearty grasp!

But take it not away so soon again,
Nor where you give your hand, refuse your eye.
Why don't you look at me?

Eust. Let go my hand!

Wal. Such haste to take away—so frank to give?

Eust. Let go my hand!—Well, you may keep it, sir;
You cannot make it like its prison, nor,

When once 'tis free from't, enter it again.

Wal. Well—call me Walsingham, I'll let it go.

Why must I force you thus to be my friend?

Eust. Why should you? Force made never yet a friend!

Wal. For kindness, then! why would you hold me off?
A man repell'd of fortune! See you not,

I am not of the vein of those on whom

She lavishes her smiles—nor do I think

With surfeit of such sweet you bought that cast

Of thoughtfulness, which when I look upon you,

Like to my glass, shows me, methinks, myself!—

I am a man of honour and of heart—

Ah, too much heart! Come, call me Walsingham,

And then I'll let you go.

Eust. Well—Walsingham!

Wal. I' faith, most kindly did you sound my name;

Tongue never fell it yet more sweetly from,

Save one!—Save one!

Eust. Farewell!

Wal. We'll walk together.

Eust. Nay.

Wal. Will you have it so, why have it so;

My love is not that sturdy beggar yet,

But spurning may suffice to stop its craving!

Yet ere you leave me, hear me—and, then, go.

Methinks our fates in something are alike;

To prove it so, or not, I'll tell thee mine.

Give thee my confidence—make thee indeed my friend!

Now, once for all, what say you?

Eust. Be it so.

Wal. Thy hand again, then!—Do we go together?

Eust. We do!—Have with you!

Wal. Now we are friends, for ever!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in Hero's Town House.*

Enter SIR WILLIAM and EMILY.

Sir Wil. At sea again! Blown ever from the port

We'd have her harbour in, by her wild fancies,

And far from land as ever! 'Twas my hope

'This suitor would have proved sure anchorage.

Emily. And so 'twas mine. She'll ne'er be held by suitor,

Long as there bows another—save it be
By a miracle. I say it, though I love her!

Sir Wil. And yet that lord hath held her.

Emily. So he hath,

By dint of mere audacity—some art,
He owns, makes other suitors quail, and she,
For vanity, hath still affected him,
As proud to have a vassal in a man
To whom his fellows bow.

Sir Wil. I am glad so slight
His power. I know him for a profligate,
With broken coffers, to replenish which
He merely follows her.

Emily. His practice 'twas
Which to this issue led—On some account
I know not—nay, nor guess—he durst not treat
Sir Valentine with overbearing mien,
So took advantage of fair Hero's weakness,
To play upon't, expose, and with disgust
Surfeit the man he fear'd.

Sir Wil. And he succeeded?

Emily. Ay, to the full, sir, as I have possess'd you.

Sir Wil. I am sorry for it. He had begun to love her,
And would have made to her a worthy husband;
Safe guardian to her wealth; and one to make
A proud wife of a higher dame than she!
It crossly hath fallen out. But she is piqued,
You say at his desertion?

Emily. Much, sir!—Much!
She wept, as I acquainted you.

Sir Wil. You did,
And matter see I there. Unfeign'd tears—
And such were hers—from deep-laid fountains flow,
Abiding in the heart! The argument
Which draws them thence, as deep must even go.
A curling lip I had not heeded—that
Were simple scorn—but they who weep, for scorn,
Must weep for something more. Sir Valentine
Hath not his peer in England! Trust me, girl,
She's not so blind with folly, as not to see
His paramount desert!—Where is she?

Emily. Lock'd
In her chamber with her milliner,—so says
Her maid. These three hours have I craved admission,
But all in vain. She has not yet press'd pillow
Sufficient to repair her spirits from
The waste of yesternight.

Sir Wil. A wayward girl!
New dresses, pleasures, lovers—all things new,
Except herself. Would *that* would change, as well!
Some mode she studies with her minister
Of novelty, to flog all former folly,

[Knocking.]

What sober knock is that?—Such seldom calls
At her fantastic door. Who knocks?

Enter Servant.

Servant. A man,
Of formal habit and consorting speech,
Usher to one most young and fair; a maid
Who seems to know no use for beauty, but
To mortify it with ungainly guise.
She asks to see the mistress of the house.

Sir Wil. Admit her!—On what errand can she come?

[*Servant goes out, and returns, showing in CLEVER,
followed by HERO, both disguised as Quakers.*]

Who art thou?

Clever. Man unto Ruth Mapleson,
Who with the woman of the house would speak;

Sir Wil. The woman of the house!

Emily. Ruth Mapleson!

Hero. Friend, am I right? This house of vanity,
Is't the abode of that unfortunate
They call the City Maid? who, to the use
Of one, perverts what Heaven lavishly
Committed to her, for the good of many!
Is this her house?—and if it is, I pray you
Acquaint her that a sister, pitying
Her hapless state of blindness, ignorance,
Omission and offence, hath come to her
To clear her vision, to inform her mind,
To teach her occupation, and from evil
To turn her steps aside.—Umph!

Clever. Umph!

Sir Wil. My breath
Is almost stopp'd with wonder!

Emily. So is mine.

What can it mean?

Sir Wil. Some poor fanatic 'tis,
Whose zeal hath warp'd her reason.

Hero. Sinful man,
Thus is it with the children of the flesh!
What argues wisdom they misconstrue madness!
Though through perverseness rather than conviction.
Tremble!—Look down!—Abase thee to the dust!
Shouldst thou not blush at thy grey hairs, the vouchers
For thriftless years, for profitless experience!
'Tis winter with thee—harvest-time is past—
What hast thou garner'd? Chaff instead of grain!
What doest thou with gauds like these, thy trappings?
Why standest thou beneath this roof of pride,
That shouldst be thinking of the charnel-house
And the attire of its inhabitant?
I know thee uncle to that maid of lightness,
That mistress of this house of emptiness,

And whom I come to chasten and reform!
Umph!

Clever. Umph!

Emily. Dear sir! who is't? I grow uneasy!
With sense of the unearthly, and I feel
As though an apparition stood before me,
And wish she were away!

Sir Wil. And so do I!

Hero. [To *EMILY.*] And thou, poor flesh and blood!—illusion!
—heirdom

O' the worm! that think'st thyself all soundness, yet
Art all corruption! Why abidest thou in
The lazar-house? Depart from it! Pull off
Its dress, and don the clean and wholesome guise
Of plainness and humility—Umph!

Clever. Umph!

Sir Wil. This bold intrusion and address—

Hero. Peace, Satan!

And yet, perhaps I wrong you! Privily
You may condemn proud Hero's fantasies?

Sir Wil. I do!

Emily. And so do I!

Hero. O do you so?

Then are ye not, as I did reckon you,
O' the children of the Prince of Darkness?

Sir Wil. and Emily. No!

Hero. You see that she is miserably vain?

Emily. We else were blind.

Sir Wil. Stone blind!

Hero. Capricious?

Emily. Yes! As many moods as there's hours in the day.

Sir Wil. Say minutes, rather!

Hero. Fond of pleasure?

Emily. 'Tis her constant occupation.

Sir Wil. 'Tis her meat

And drink; rest, business, studies, prayers, and sleep!

Hero. She hath no constancy in aught—
Lovers especially?

Emily. She changes them
Continually.

Sir Wil. As she does her dresses
Show her a new one, she casts off the last,
How new soe'er put on!

Hero. I pity her.

Emily. She scarce deserves it.

Sir Wil. Pity is too good

For such a piece of waywardness, perverseness,
Pride, folly, fantasy and emptiness!

Hero. So then we are all of the same mind?

Emily. Exactly.

Sir Wil. Not a pin's point difference!

Hero. You would approve that I reform her then?

Emily. Reform her! can you do so, do it!

Sir Wil. Do!

Do! Make her anything but what she is.

Emily. Change cannot fail to better her.

Sir Wil. No change

Can make her worse!—Reform her, pray!

Hero. I will.

Sir Wil. and Emily. When?

Hero. When you take her for another thing
And find her just the same!—O, uncle, fie!

Fie, Emily! Is this your loyalty?

Sir Wil. What means this metamorphosis?

Hero. Defence

Of my sex's rights—assertion of my own!

Instruction to that master-work, call'd man!

Protest and re-establishment of due

Prerogative! reduction of rebellion,

Transform'd from rear'd crest to bended knee!

Pains, penalties, bonds, confiscations, deaths,

To follow thereupon!

Sir Wil. Why, niece, what wind
Has brought this change of weather?

Hero. Are you a man?

Sir Wil. I trust I am!

Hero. Then if you are, you know
The privileges of a single woman.

We have few, we thank you, when we change the state

Of single blessedness, most rightly dubb'd—

Is't not a single woman's right to rule?

Sir Wil. It is.

Hero. To have her will her law?

Sir Wil. It is.

Hero. To have as many tastes, moods, fits, as she likes?

Sir Wil. It is.

Hero. To come, to go, to smile, to frown,
To please, to pain, to love, to hate, do aught

Without dispute?

Sir Wil. It is.

Hero. Is't not enough,
You have leave to look upon her—listen to her—
Stand in her presence—wait upon her? Must
Her 'haviour, speech, be what you like, or what
It likes her sovereign self that they should be?

Sir Wil. What likes her sovereign self!

Hero. You are a man!

Would all your sex were like you! Who are not,

Are not for me, believe me! Look you, uncle!

I'll make the saucy traitor feel my power,

Or I will break my heart! He thinks me fair—

I thank him! Well-proportion'd—very much

Beholden to him! Dignified and graceful—

A man of shrewd perception! very!—send him

On expedition of discovery!

Sir Wil. Whom mean you, Hero?

Hero. Whom?—Sir Valentine!
 He has made his bow! Indeed, a gracious one—
 A stately, courtly, condescending one!
 Ne'er may I curtsy, if he bow not lower!
 I'll bring him to his knees as a spoil'd child
 With uplift hands that asketh pardon; then
 Command him up, and never see me more!

Sir Wil. Why, how hath this befallen?

Hero. I did not dance
 To please him! No, sir! He is a connoisseur
 In dancing!—hath a notion of his own
 Of a step! In carriage, attitude, has taste,
 Dainty as palate of an epicure,
 Which, if you hit not to a hair, disgust
 Takes the place of keenest zest! He is sick of me!
 My feet the frolic measure may indulge in,
 But not my heart—mine eye, my cheek, my lip,
 Must not be cognizant of what I do—
 As wood and marble could be brought to dance,
 And look like wood and marble! I shall teach him
 Another style! Come! I have found you out;
 Will you compound for your sedition,
 And help me? Come! How say you, little traitress?

Emily. Content.

Hero. And you, most reverend rebellion?

Sir Wil. Command me aught, that I can do in reason.

Hero. Can do in reason! In what reason? There
 Are fifty kinds of reason! There's a fool's reason,
 And a wise man's reason, and a knave's reason, and
 An honest man's reason, and an infant's reason,
 And reason of a grandfather—but there's
 A reason 'bove them all, and that alone
 Can stand me now in stead—a woman's reason!
 Wilt thou be subject unto me in that?

Sir Wil. I will.

But say where practised you, to act so well
 The solemn friend?

Hero. At school.

Sir Wil. At school!

Hero. I learn'd it from one I knew and loved there—a sweet
 girl

Half, by the sect that uses it, brought up.
 But she of thought and will, therewith consorting
 The mistress likewise was, most veritable!
 Her name was Helen Mowbray—By the arts
 Of that same lord to whom I owe the coil
 I would unwind me from, and whom, through whim,
 Not liking, I have countenanced, 'tis said
 She fell—but not in my belief. How is this?
 I am growing serious! You will help me?

Sir Wil. Yes.

Hero. That's my good uncle! That's a darling uncle!

There ne'er was kinder, nor more sensible!
A good, dear, wise, obedient, docile uncle!
Give me a kiss! Hence, Master Clever! Do
What I directed you—Sir Valentine
Be he at home;—invite him where I advised you—
To the house at Greenwich. [CLEVER goes out.]

Sir Wil. What dost thou intend?

Hero. Order the carriage—no; it must be one
They lend for hire:—and come along with me—
I'll tell you on the way. Emily!—Uncle!
Look you! [*Throws her glove down.*] I'll have him, as my
glove, that there,
At my feet to lie, till I please to pick him up!
And I *will* pick him up—but in a way!
There!—give it me again—O, you dear uncle,
To help my plot!—do what I wish!—You ought
To be an uncle! There's another kiss!
And if I do not make *him* kiss the rod,
I'm ne'er a niece deserving such an uncle!
Come! come!—I did not dance to please him! Come.
[*They go out.*]

SCENE III.—*Sir Valentine's House.*

Enter SIR VALENTINE.

Sir Val. Oh, pitiable case! so rich a stamp,
And yet the metal base! For what high things
Did nature fashion her!—whose rich intent
Had she but half fulfill'd, no wealth, no state
That earth can furnish, for aggrandizement
Of craving and insatiate ambition,
Conferr'd on her, had given her half her due,
Far less its debtor made her! Misery!
To find the good we hoped, the bane we hate
Hate!—O, perverse and doubtful course of love,
That in the goal, it pants for, finds its grave!
That reaches for a bliss, and clasps a pang!
That thinks it owns a mine, and finds it none!
O beggary most poor, that from the lapse
Of heap'd-up riches grows!

Enter Servant.

Servant. You are wanted, sir.

Sir Val. Who wants me?

Servant. One who brings an errand from
Sir William Sutton, and craves speech with you.

Sir Val. Admit him.

[*Servant goes out.*]

Enter CLEVER.

Well?

Clever. Are you the man they call
Sir Valentine de Grey?

Sir Val. The man?

Clever. The man.

Sir Val. I see!—I am Sir Valentine de Grey.

Clever. Then, being he, another man they call Sir William Sutton, sends me here to pray Thy company this afternoon, to meet Some friends who dine with him at Greenwich.

Sir Val. Say,

I cannot come.

Clever. Art thou engaged, friend?

Sir Val. No.

Clever. Then speak'st thou not the truth. Thou canst come.

Sir Val. Say,

I will not come.

Clever. He bade me say to thee

Thou *must* come.

Sir Val. Must come?

Clever. Yes; so come along.

For he gave charge to me to bring thee—and

I said I would; and not to bring thee, were

To break my word, and I must *keep* my word.

Sir Val. Tell him, I was not in.

Clever. I will not tell

A lie.

Sir Val. Art thou his servant?

Clever. No; but man

To one that's niece to him—that's, in the flesh—

Not in the spirit.

Sir Val. Wherefore?

Clever. Know'st thou him,

And know'st thou not he is a man of sin?

Ruth Mapleson is of the faithful!

Sir Val. Who?

Clever. Ruth Mapleson.

Sir Val. I know no niece he hath,

Save one—fair Mistress Sutton.

Clever. Name her not—

Daughter of darkness!

Sir Val. Liar!

Clever. Thou dost lie

To call me so.

Sir Val. Wretch!

Clever. Thou dost lie again.

I am a godly and a happy man,

That waits upon Ruth Mapleson, the niece

Of him they call Sir William Sutton; and

Cousin to Hero Sutton, whom in naught

Ruth Mapleson resembles—face and form

Excepted; wherein she might pass for her,

She is so like her!

Sir Val. Like her! Saidst thou like her?

Clever. Now that's hypocrisy! Thou heard me say it.
Like her in voice, complexion, feature—so
Put sober Ruth in giddy Hero's dress,
Thee'dst swear—What did I say—Young man, this comes
Of evil communication.

Sir Val. Well?

Clever. Thee'dst say,
'Twas giddy Hero's self, though all the while
'Twas sober Ruth thee saw'st.

Sir Val. Incredible!

Clever. Young man, thee keepest company that speak
One thing and think another! That's my hand;
I take't away, and show it thee again:
Is it another hand?

Sir Val. Knave, 'tis the same.

Clever. Miscall me not, friend! Knave is not my name,
But Obadiah. Use me civilly,
That do instruct thee, who art ignorant.
Not more in verity is that hand the same,
Than is Ruth Mapleson, in perfect likeness
Of feature, figure, voice, complexion, all
That makes the outward woman—just the same,
As Hero Sutton! But, alas, within,
Winter and summer are not less akin!

Sir Val. How, knave?

Clever. I told thee not to call me "knave:"
My name is Obadiah.

Sir Val. Obadiah

I'll call thee then. How are these cousins as
Unlike, as winter is to summer?

Clever. Thus.—Is winter barren? so is the maiden Hero;—
Is it made up of fogs and rain? so is the maiden Hero, of
vapours and the spleen;—Hath it much cloud and little sun? so
hath the maiden Hero great discontent, small content;—Hath
it long night, and brief day? so hath the maiden Hero lasting
displeasure, short favour;—Is there any depending upon it? no
more is there upon the maiden Hero;—Do you wish it heartily
away? so would you be rid of the maiden Hero.

Sir Val. I fear thou art a slanderer.

Clever. I see

Thou lack'st good manners, which is grievous, friend,
In one of thy degree. Thou callest names
As scavengers that quarrel in the streets,
Most unbecomingly!

Sir Val. Well; now proceed.

What of her cousin?

Clever. Though a godly man,
Yet am I flesh and blood, and thou dost vex
My spirit, friend, by so misusing me.
I tell thee once again, my name is not
Liar, nor knave, nor slanderer, nor aught
But Obadiah.

Sir Val. Well—enough of that;
Her cousin? Come! Her cousin?

Clever. Though I am
A man of peace, I am a valiant man.
I combat not, but yet the elements
Of war are given me, friend! I am full of them,
Save what is in me of the goodly thing
That mortifies the flesh, and keeps them in
Subjection! Yea, I am a warlike man!
Yea, verily, a very warlike man!

Sir Val. I ask thy pardon.

Clever. I do grant it thee;
Thou dost a proper thing; and now shalt hear,
Wherein the maiden Ruth, who outwardly,
Is to the maiden Hero what that maiden
Is to herself, is, inwardly, reverse
As summer is to winter.

Sir Val. Prithee on!

Clever. Is summer fertile? is summer clear? hath it little
cloud, and much sun; long day, and short night—and that
more like day, than night? is summer constant, and do you
wish it never away? so is the maiden Ruth bounteous; so is
the maiden Ruth cheerful; so hath she twenty smiles for one
frown; lasting favour, brief displeasure—which you would
almost take to be favour; so is she little liable to change; so
would you wish to have her ever with you!

Sir Val. Where dwells this cousin?

Clever. In Greenwich, friend, whither thou goest; not in
the same house with him that sends for thee—for light dwelleth
not with darkness—but in another habitation, where her books,
and her flowers, and her own sweet thoughts, which are fairer
and wiser than either, are her only companions.

Sir Val. I'll go with thee to Greenwich straight! Lead
on!

Clever. Hold, friend!—You must do all things soberly.
[*They go out, CLEVER preceding with extreme gravity.*]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Outskirts of London.*

Enter EUSTACE and WALSHINGHAM.

Eust. Now for the confidence you promised me.

Wal. Canst thou not guess my story? Look at me!
Seem my years more than his you'd reckon in
Life's outset, when beneath our feet all's flowers,
Above our heads all sun? Canst not divine

What could alone o'ercast and wither thus?
Nor only take away the adjuncts sweet
Of that fair prime of hope, but prospect leave
Of nought but cloud and barrenness?

Eust. Ambition?

Wal. No; that's an after-game. There's one we play
Before, o'er which the heart will throb, as o'er
None other!—where we throw the die, whose turn
Nine times in ten's the oracle foretells
All chance to come! which, if we play in earnest—
And light are they who of that game make light—
We make ourselves for ever, or lose all,
Doubling the value of our being, or
Reducing it to naught!—a game, methinks,
Which you have play'd at—Love.—Am I not right?

Eust. You are.

Wal. You didn't win?

Eust. [*hesitatingly*]. I didn't.

Wal. How?

You speak as one that yet did neither lose—
Whose game not yet was out—a chance, although
With heavy odds against him! Mark me; if
Thou hast rivals whom she entertains like thee,
With just so much of hope, as may suffice
To keep them suitors still, while each can say,
She's mine, as well as t'other—give her up!
Away with her! Abandon her for ever!
Thou woo'st, what, if thou winn'st—the tongue is kind—
Not that doth give thee joy—but wish thee dead!
The keeper, not the owner of a thing
Wherein is lock'd thy life, and thy life's gems—
Thy peace and honour dear!

Eust. Won such a maid
Thy love?

Wal. Not such a maid! No! No! she lived
Forbidden to all but me. The statue's ear
And eye, you'd think, as much perception had
Of wonder at the consummate chisel's skill,
As hers of praise from others' eyes and tongues.
But, oh! at lightest glance or sound of mine,
How would the rich and fair-wrought marble glow!

Eust. Thou mourn'st her dead, then?

Wal. Dead?—Ay, dead! a corpse,
A mouldering corpse, that's with corruption housed,
Which skill medicinal can ne'er restore
To its sweet life again!—the which to weep
Is all that fondest eyes may look for, now;
The life, alas! of her fair honour's gone!

Eust. What! lived she but for thee, and gave she up
Her richest jewel to another?

Wal. You

Shall hear my story. What in form she was,

I will not paint to you.—Each lover has,
 You know, the fairest she—say, mine's a paragon
 As much as thine; yet, of the very charm
 That's crest of all, thou wilt but mak'e a seat
 To mount some plume of hers, whom thou affect'st,
 That shall transcend it far! I know it—so
 Forbear. Yet had you e'er set eyes upon her!
 Alas! she stood alone! To truest hearts
 The sight of her was wonderful estrangement,
 Weaning them for a time from things, howe'er
 Clung dotingly to before—that mistresses
 Have sadden'd to see eyes, that blazed on them
 Ere they were turn'd away, turn back again
 Listless and icy cold! Riches and rank,
 Bestudded o'er and gilded, have look'd blank
 To see themselves outshone without a gem!
 Nay, very hostesses, whose only care
 Was to behold their costly huswifery
 Approved, have been discomfited to see
 Their tables crown'd as ne'er they were before,
 And she the only garnish of the board!

Eust. Fancied you not that others saw like you?

Wal. No! no! I saw they did—I felt they did—
 Felt it through many a pang of doubt—but not
 Through fear of her demerits, but my own!

Eust. Ne'er gave she cause to doubt?

Wal. No!

Eust. Still she fail'd?

Wal. As life—when health, that is the heart of life,
 Seems sound to the very core!—has ne'er given sign
 Of flaw or speck—this moment in the bloom—
 The next, is blasted!

Eust. What you so assert,
 The more that you assert, the more I doubt!
 What! truth to falsehood in a moment turn?
 Virtue to vice? Love to estrangement? Love!
 And in a woman! Had she loved before?

Wal. No!

Eust. Her first love, too!—But she was a child?

Wal. No; in the blush of bursting womanhood.

Eust. And left thee for another? No declining
 Of that first passion? Never seen to wane
 A little now—now more? but all at once
 Go out! Impossible! You've been deceived!
 Abused! you have! my life, my soul upon it!

Wal. They're costly pledges to be forfeited;
 Then risk them not!

Eust. What canst thou set against them?

Wal. Proofs! facts!

Eust. Facts?

Wal. Facts! *My* cause thou wast engaged in?
 How is't I find thee in another's listed?

Eust. Whose is the cause of her thou lov'st, but thine?

Wal. Not if she's false.

Eust. But if she's true?

Wal. She's not!

By truth, she's not!

Eust. By truth, she *is*!—unless,

Things, coinciding just as much as the East

And West—high Heaven and the Abyss—noonday

And midnight—reason and madness—contraries

Confess'd and palpable—for so opposed,

I own, do your averments seem to me—

You prove to be identical.

Wal. Listen, then!

Who wins a prize, thou know'st wins envy too.

With such a prize thou wilt not wonder then

That many grudged my fortune! 'Mong the rest

Was one, a satire on the saucy code

That makes the wreath of merit, birth-right, when

No law can make the grace that wins it so!

This titled profligate alone, no check,

Reverse, rebuke, rejection, could divert

From pressing still his suit: my arm had tried it,

But that she hung upon it, minding me

The life I'd peril was the heart of hers!

She did!—and for enforcement show'd to me

Vouchers on vouchers—genuine sighs and tears!

Art couldn't feign such—I'll do justice to her—

She then was true—as true as haggard since!

Why weep'st thou?

Eust. Thou dost weep; and tears draw tears,

When grief itself will fail.

Wal. Then dry your eyes;

You'll ne'er see mine again! you think me lost

To honour?

Eust. No!

Wal. What! not to weep a wanton?

Eust. O, not a wanton!

Wal. How!

Eust. Not then a wanton!

Wal. Not then! The devil was once an angel—what

Of that? He fell!—who weeps him? no one! What

Though she was once a spirit of light, as he was,

When now she's black as he?

Eust. Nay!

Wal. Doubt it not!

To cavil at the right we feel to writhe,

Is aggravation, that adds wrong to wrong,

And drives before-o'erburthen'd patience mad!

The sun itself stared on it!—'twas not lewdness

Chamber'd—behind the curtain—'Twas i' the street,

Light as noonday could make it!—without cloak!

Hood!—veil!—Now call it questionable! Nothing

To mask the wanton!—Oh! for a thunderbolt;
To strike me then!—from a noted, libell'd stew;
Led by the noble libertine—his trophy,
Worn on his arm, in the gaze of every eye—
I saw her issue.

Eust. Did she shun thee?

Wal. No!

Eust. That was a proof of innocence.

Wal. Of guilt!

Rank! rank!—a sudden and entire infection,
A touch and rottenness; as from the bite
Of a serpent, in an instant, ruddy life;
To black corruption grows! Why should she shun me?
She had her tale at hand! 'Twas but to make
Her paramour her friend; their assignation
A freak of chance; her reconciliation to
A man she loath'd before, a debt; and for
That debt assign a cause equivalent;—
All which she did in a breath! 'Twas clear, sir; clear!
The truth spoke for itself! Fact built of fact—
Nought out of place or disproportionate!
As obviously *that* followed *this*; *this*, *that*!
As this doth chime with this, and that with that!
A thing one must believe!—from end to end,
A lie, sir!—He had saved her from a villain!
The villain!—when she appeal'd to him, he'd damn her!
"He fain would bear her out! His life was hers!
"His fortune—but upon a point of honour—
"In question with a man of honour—not
"That he denied her fair averments though—
"He pray'd she would excuse him!"

Eust. You believed him!

Him you believed, that ne'er was true before!
Her disbelieved, was ne'er before but true?

Wal. Herself admitted it.

Eust. How?

Wal. By damning silence!

Eust. Is't guilt alone, convicted, that keeps silence?

Guilt—saucy guilt—that dares to break the law

Of God and man! Remember you no case,

Where innocence accused bath all at once

Been stricken dumb?—appall'd to undergo

The charge of sin, that never could endure

The thought of sin?—appearances against her,

And witness for her none, but her own heart?

Her very blood betraying her, deserting

Its post upon her cheek, whence, were it bold

As honest, 'fore a host 'twould ne'er give way!

Remember you no case like this? or if

Your memory none records, is such a one

So much at odds with probability,

Your fancy cannot image it? A woman,

Young, charily brought up, as vestal for
The fane!—suppose a novice; so sincere,
She loved and knew it not, till, by its signs,
Others more skill'd find out the passion for her,
And told her that she loved!

Wal. Thou draw'st herself!

Eust. And such a one, by accident or plot,
Sudden to stand in such predicament
As of her honour valid question founded—
In presence too of him whose value for
The gem had made it doubly, trebly dear—
And then, appealing to a villain's truth,
To find the tongue should clear, but blur'd her more!—
Oh! I would ask for signs of life as soon
From lips of stone, as look for words from hers!
She couldn't speak!—Speak? breathe! she would be stunn'd
To utter lapse of every sense, except
That at her heart, which told it at that hour
It would be bliss to break! Should she be true
At last—

Wal. No more of this!

Eust. Have I not shaken—

Not much, but somewhat—say, a little—say,
A very little—your belief of her
Dishonour?

Wal. Speak not of her.

Eust. If she is pure,

Despite appearances, as first you thought her;
Constant, despite desertion; and despite
Wrongs, scornings, brandings, fond;—it may be fonder—
For woman's love's a plant, I've often heard,
Which mocketh all that thrive in winter time,
Not only keeping green, but growing then.

Wal. You take, methinks, strange interest in her fate!

Eust. I have a friend, whose fate resembles hers—
Whose cause I'm sworn to right! Besides, we're friends.
Thou art not happy?

Wal. No.

Eust. I would see thee so.

To have thee so, I'd wish thee in the wrong.
She's not forgotten—is she?

Wal. Would she were!

Eust. Perhaps thou lov'st her still?

Wal. To madness! There's

My malady. I love her—not what she is,
But what she was! What's present—that's her swerving,
That's palpable, which you may see, touch, handle,
Define, weigh, prove by any test is real—
Feels but a phantasm, a conceit, a dream—
A horrible one!—in contrast with what's past,
Her worth, her love, her constancy, that vanish'd
Or e'er you question'd them.

Eust. Art sure of that?
Come, come, thou'rt not, at least, thou'rt not *quite* sure.
Now did she stand before thee undismay'd
Confiding in thy honour—say thy patience—
Say thy endurance——

Wal. If my eyes could look
The mandate of my soul, they would flash lightning on her.
To blast her where she stood! What ails thee?

Eust. Nought—
What did I do? How did I look? What saw'st,
To ask? Did I turn pale, or start, or what?
Do I tremble? Feel!—I am past fear, grief, pain,
As death! Give me thy arm, and come with me.
I'll show thee what a piece of rock thou thought'st
Was quaking. Thou a false woman, as thou think'st her,
Wouldst revenge—I would revenge a woman wrong'd!
Bitterly wrong'd! so wrong'd, that after her
None should complain of hardship! Come! and see,
Which holds his purpose most tenaciously. [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in HERO'S House at Greenwich.*

Enter SIR VALENTINE and CLEVER.

Sir Val. I tell thee, I must see her!

Clever. Friend, thy face,
Albeit no modest one, thy deeds outdo
In forwardness! I brought thee but to see
The maiden's house—and thou wouldst enter it!
Nor therewith rest'st content—but must have speech
With her that owns it, and escheweth thee,
As all ungodly things!

Sir Val. And I will have it!
So tell thyself—but gently say to her,
A stranger craveth audience. Mind—a stranger.
And do my bidding; else I may forget
Thou art a man of peace, and, may be, beat thee.
Yea—beat thee—I repeat it! and, I pray thee,
Make me not do't again!

Clever. I will submit—
Ere I will use the argument o' th' flesh,
For that would hurt my spirit. Umph! I am gone! [*Goes out.*]

Sir Val. So far, so well! Admittance I have gain'd,
And now an audience wait—but doubtingly.
Her cousin?—then behoves me change my name,
Else, knowing me for Hero's suitor, she
May spurn me. Yes! I'll even call myself
Sir Launcelot de Vere.—Can this be she?
The knave has mock'd me—and the world of hopes
That sudden rose to my imagining,

Melts into nothing.—Stay!—It forms again!
 It grows to probability.—No vapour
 That takes a passing form!—is here and gone!
 But a sincere and palpable creation!
 Another Hero is there—or I see
 The same!—Oh, likeness at beholding, e'en,
 Incredible!—that makes with wonderment
 The vision waver, and the utterance fail!

Enter HERO (disguised as before).

Hero. Well? What's your will?

Sir Val. Forgive me, lady, if
 With occupation of mine eyes, awhile
 I thus forget the office of my tongue
 To give thee 'custom'd salutation! Still—
 Still would I gaze, nor speak! Art what thou seem'st?

Hero. What seem I, friend?

Sir Val. Likeness—unlikeness! A thing
 Most different—and yet the very same!
 What I would give averment of, most strong—
 Again most strong deny! The form of the bane,
 With the sweet virtue of the antidote!
 The rose, was canker'd yesterday, to-day
 Freshness and soundness to the very core!
 O beauty conscious of its proper pride!
 That nothing deigns to ask, to set it off,
 Except simplicity, that offers nought,
 Yet all that's due performs! I have not lived
 Till now!—I have but dealt with shows of life,
 Automaton, that do not know themselves,
 But act from causes, are no part of them!
 But here is nature's mechanism—mind
 And soul—a body fitting them, informing
 With motions of their own.

Hero. Friend, art thou mad?

Sir Val. Mad, lady?

Hero. Rational, thou canst not be!

Sir Val. Not rational?

Hero. If that—which much I doubt—
 Certain, not favour'd with the grace of truth.
Sir Val. Doubt'st thou I utter aught but truth?

Hero. I doubt
 Thy wits, thy wisdom, or thy truth. Not mad,
 Thou art not wise—if wise, thou speak'st not truth.
 And sooth to say, thy dress of vanity,
 Thy looks of wildness, and thy air, assured,
 Where one who knew propriety would feel
 Disturbance—this abrupt intrusion, which
 Nor leave, nor introduction, nor acquaintance
 Can justify—approve thee void of truth,
 Unwise, or mad!—if none of these, a man
 Of cloddish nature, base and ignorant!

Sir Val. Oh! say not cloddish nature! Say not base,
 Nor ignorant! It is the dignity
 Of man, that the bright stars invite his mind
 To soar the empyrean where they sit,
 Placed infinite beyond terrestrial reach;
 And scan their uses and their essences,—
 High argument of his affinity—
 To him that made them, and the immortal light
 That shall outlast this filmy, shadowy sphere
 Whereon they look and smile! 'Twas told to me
 That thou wast perfect fair—I doubted that,
 For I had found, methought, the paragon
 Of beauty's wealth in woman! then 'twas said
 That thou wast wise—I wish'd thee that, for still,
 Though oft at fault, in noble house I've lodged
 Noble inhabitant! 'Twas said again
 That thou wast good—then I believed thee wise,
 For wisdom should bear goodness, or no fruit!
 And good and wise, believed thee fairest too,
 And coveted! Nor come I without leave—
 Thy simple life, eschewing worldly forms,
 Was pledge for leave! Nor lack I introduction,
 That honest errand bring to vouch for me.
 Nor, least of all, acquaintance—I have known thee
 Since matured thought, my nature's fondest wish
 Informing, told it loveliness of soul,
 Yet more than that of body, forms the woman,
 And, therewith when abiding, makes full up
 The highest worth that excellence on earth
 Amounts to—nearest what we hope in Heaven

Hero. Friend, dost thou know thou talkest to a worm?

Sir Val. A worm!

Hero. A mite?

Sir Val. A mite!

Hero. Nor yet a mite—

A congregate of evils, whereunto

The worm and mite are strangers?

Sir Val. Evils!

Hero. Know'st not

That beauty will take cold?—will have the tooth-ache?

Will catch a fever?—that its peachy cheek

Will canker in a night?—that its sweet lips,

Palace of smiles, spasm will compel to change

Their garish tenants for uncouth contortions?

That its fair dress of pride—its velvet skin—

Humours will spot, discolour?—that, in brief,

It is a thing in value vanishing

As fickle merchandise, which rates to-day

Enormously—the next, may go a-begging?

And, worse than all, that its chief merit lies

In wishing, not possessing?—coveted,

Of purchase measureless—obtain'd, worth nothing!

Sir Val. Thou mean'st the beauty that but meets the eye?

Hero. I mean the beauty thou alone canst see,
And provest thou only see'st. Why, what pains
Thou takest with a common piece of clay
To set it off! A fine account to turn
The bow of God to—meant for spiritual,
And not corporeal use—with divers tints
To clothe thy body! besides lading it
With the mine's produce—gems and metals—proof
Far more *without* concerns thee than *within*!
Oh! that a nature, of immortal reach,
Should house its aspirations in a crib
Like this poor tiny world! and, taught to look
Above the coronets of the fair stars;
Go proud with grains of dust and gossamer,
The property of things inferior to him,
As motes unto the sun! But I forget—Thy errand?

Sir Val. Love!

Hero. 'Tis clear, thou'rt mad! What! love
Whom ne'er thou saw'st before!

Sir Val. Nay, pardon me,
And let thy patience lend me audience, while
I show thee my credentials, on the faith
Of which I come. I have seen thee very oft.

Hero. Stark mad!

Sir Val. Nay, rational—as rational
As reason in its soberest, perfect mood—
Held converse with thee, countless times.

Hero. Broke loose
From Bedlam!

Sir Val. Walk'd and sat with thee.

Hero. I trust
Thy keeper is at hand!

Sir Val. He came with me.

Hero. Where is he?

Sir Val. Here, although thou see'st him not.
My keeper's Love. I have woo'd thee for a month!

Hero. Hoa! help!

Sir Val. Be not alarm'd.

Hero. Nay, touch me not!
When didst thou break thy chains?

Sir Val. I wear them yet;
The subtle ones that self-same beauty forged,
Which now I look upon—most gorgeous dress,
But by another worn.

Hero. Oh! you have loved
One that resembles me.

Sir Val. I have.

Hero. 'Tis not
A fit, then?

Sir Val. No; for fits are vanishing.
This is a mood like nature's; lasts for life!

Enter CLEVER.

Clever. Why didst thou call? I heard thy voice, in fear.

Hero. All's well, good Obadiah.

Clever. Is it so?

Then I may go again. Young man, beware.

Thou frighten'st not the maiden. We are meek,

And offer not offence; but meeting it,

As injury will make the worm rebel,

We turn, and we are strong—yea, very strong!—

Whose wrath, albeit a pebble, hath avail

To smite a giant!—therefore, tempt it not!

Umph!

[*Goes out.*]

Hero. Thou hast known a maiden like me?

Sir Val. Yes;

I have loved a maid, most like thee—most unlike;

Without, as costly,—but within, as poor

To thee, as penury to affluence.

Hero. And didst thou love and woo her for a month,

And a defaulter, thus? 'Twas grievous lack

Of penetration.

Sir Val. Nay, 'twas specious show

That valid credit won.

Hero. Thou art a man

Like all thy worldly class, of shallow mind.

Thy heart is in thine eyes! What pleaseth them,

Is sure of that.

Sir Val. Nay, I had then loved on.

Hero. What cured thy love?

Sir Val. I saw her in a dance

Light nature show.

Hero. A dance! Oh! I have heard

Of such a thing. An idle pastime! What

But folly comes of folly? Do you dance?

Sir Val. I do.

Hero. What kind of a thing is it? Come, show me!

Sir Val. I pray you to excuse me.

Hero. Nay, but dance.

Sir Val. I pray you, ask me not.

Hero. Thou dancest badly?

Sir Val. Nay, I have won some credit in the dance.

Hero. Then do the thing thou hast won credit by.

Sir Val. I cannot.

Hero. Friend, thou art ashamed to dance.

Sir Val. Nay, not ashamed.

Hero. Then dance!

Sir Val. 'Twere out of time

And place.

Hero. What, out of time and place, and to

A man of gallantry, to do the thing

A lady wishes him; and he the while

On sufferance in her presence! I perceive!

Thou art in a grave mood, and for a man to dance,
 And look like Solomon, I must suppose
 Were more offence to seriousness, than were
 A cap and bells. Friend, it is very clear
 Thou canst not dance, and look like a wise man—
 Yet thou woo'dst a lady, thou saidst,
 And cast her off, because she did not dance
 With gravity!

Sir Val. She danced with lightness more
 Than lightest measure warranted. No thing
 A modest woman does—say that it touches
 The utmost verge of license—but that cincture,
 Of better proof than zone of adamant,
 Its holy and offence-repelling fires,
 Keeps waving round her, that the libertine,
 Unwon by honour, yet is tamed by awe!
 She danced to gladden eyes, whose burning glances
 Turn thoughts of honest men on flashing swords,
 On flame at stains wash'd out alone by blood!
 The empire of her beauty gave a prey
 To parasites, who love for their own ends,
 And by their homage shame!

Hero. We have talk'd enough.

Sir Val. Your pardon! Yet, we have not talk'd at all—
 The errand yet untold, that brought me here—
 I would have leave to woo thee.

Hero. Thou!—a man
 Of the vain world!

Sir Val. Nay, of no world but thine!

Hero. Thou of *my* world! How comest thou by these gauds—
 Lace, ribbons, tinsel, trinkets, slashes—not
 To name that most egregious vanity
 Thou mountest in thy cap, and the poor bird
 It was purloin'd from wore for use, not show!—
 Rebuke and lesson to its wiser lord!
 There's not a portion of thee but bespeaks
 Ransacking of the earth and sea—and all
 To recommend thee unto eyes, whose owners,
 Be they the homeliest, behold thy betters
 In their own mirrors.

Sir Val. I will dress to please
 The eyes of none but thee.

Hero. Thou shouldst be rich—
 Too rich for modest happiness, and all
 Beyond is but the name! Riches are bars
 Prevent us enter Heaven; how, then, be doors
 On earth to admit us unto aught of Heaven?
 How many hundreds brings thy rental in?

Sir Val. As many as make up a thousand pounds
 To welcome every quarter.

Hero. Poor young man!
 How much I pity thee!

Sir Val. I will reduce
My revenue.

Hero. Canst thou reduce the wants
Thy revenue hath gender'd—foes to thee,
Under the masques of friends?

Sir Val. My every want
Is now summ'd up in one.

Hero. Hast thou a title?
How art thou named?

Sir Val. Sir Launcelot de Vere.

Hero. How wouldst thou bear be call'd plain Launcelot?
Thou wouldst not know thyself! *We* have no titles.
Names, being of themselves no part of us,
We only value as distinguishing
One from another. Stephen, Ephraim,
John, Obadiah, Solomon, suffice.
All adjuncts else, as Mist'ers, Sirs, Earls, Dukes,
We estimate as superfluities.

Sir Launcelot de Vere! I neither like
Title nor Christian name. More proper far
Would Peter fit—or Mark, or John, or Luke,
Or Nicodemus—names of men of peace,
And sounding passing sweet!

Sir Val. The name is mine
Thou givest me.

Hero. So thou believest now;
To-morrow, thou wilt be the former man.
Nor must I longer talk with thee; for sweet
I own the proffer of thy duty comes,
Although by me received mistrustingly.
Persist not, friend, or I may wholly doubt
What half I would believe;—which, if indeed
Thou mean'st—and, here, the frankness of a maid
Hath overshot her coyness—thou canst prove
Hath matter weightier than airy words.
Farewell! What shall I call thee?

Sir Val. Launcelot.

Hero. So soon forgot.

Sir Val. Mark, Obadiah, Job,
Peter, or—or—I lack the other names.

Hero. No matter! These are grateful as the rest,
Nor 'mongst them Peter least! What a sweet name
Is Peter!—I will call thee Peter, though
It be for the last time. [*Sighs.*] Farewell, friend Peter.

Sir Val. Stay! How may I call thee?

Hero. Say, Ruth.

Sir Val. Farewell,
Fair Ruth!

Hero. Fair Ruth! So soon forgot again!
Friend Ruth, thou ought'st to say.

Sir Val. Friend Ruth, farewell!

And yet another word ! Have I thy leave
To come to thee again ?

Hero. That must depend
On how thou com'st.

Sir Val. Then sure I come again !
Friend Ruth !

Hero. Friend Peter ?

Sir Val. May we not shake hands ?

Hero. That must depend on how thou shakest hands.

Sir Val. Why, how should I shake hands ?

Hero. Why, soberly.

Sir Val. Then soberly, friend Ruth, shake hands with me.

Hero. There, that is long enough !

Sir Val. One more word yet—

Friend Ruth, may I not kiss thy hand ?

Hero. Friend Peter !

Sir Val. I'll kiss it soberly—yea, soberly.

Farewell—once more—farewell !—One more.—It is
A banquet, gathers appetite. *[Kissing her hand.]*

Enter CLEVER.

Clever. Young man,
What dost thou ?

Sir Val. Nothing.

Clever. Yea, a thing that vexes
The spirit of the maiden, and to mine
Gives much disturbance—yea, a forward thing,
Abomination to the faithful—yea,
Abomination.—Go !

[Placing himself between them.]

Sir Val. Farewell !

Clever. Avaunt !

Such things become not eyes like hers or mine
To look upon.—Avoid !

Sir Val. Farewell ! I'll come
Again !

Hero. Then come with more discretion, friend.

Clever. Thou hear'st—avoid ! Remove thee hence ! Be-
gone !

Make not a crook, friend, of thy body—say
Farewell—do nothing more—and go !

Sir Val. Farewell !

Hero. Farewell !

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Park.*

Enter LORD ATHUNREE *and* FELTON.

Ath. Yes; I desired him to attend me here.
Behoves my door and he be strangers, lest
Our practices be traced. Want dogs him still,
And fits him for my purpose, by the threat
Of her pernicious tooth. Yet there's a weakness,
I would he had not. Much he loves his child;
Which shows his nature is not callous all;
Whence oftentimes I dread some start of ruth.
But finds he out fair Hero's close retreat,
The meagre knave shall fatten. Soft! he's here—
Well, have you traced her?

Enter LEWSON.

Lew. Yes; she is at Greenwich,
Where I and mine abide and famish.

Ath. Fool!

Not to have guess'd as much, and know she hath
A villa there. Resides she by herself?

Lew. She does.

Ath. Then is she mine. Canst thou obtain
Secret admission?

Lew. Easily, my lord;
Into her chamber-window, which looks out
Upon her garden.

Ath. It must be done to-night.

Lew. Most strangely is she changed.

Ath. How?

Lew. In her dress,
That's now the fashion of that formal sect,
Which at all worldly modes exception takes.

Ath. Indeed! some plot's on foot, and must concern
Her quarrel with Sir Valentine. To-night,
She gives me lodging. Stay—we must proceed
With such exactitude, the sun and dial
Shall vary soon as we! I'll write it down.
'Sdeath! I must change a word! I'll write it o'er
Again, that thou mayst have no scratch to hang
Excuse for failure on. There. Be observant
To the syllable. Away! Thy greatest hire,
For former service, I will double for thee,
Succeed'st thou but in this.

Lew. Misgive not, sir;
I never yet have fail'd you. But, so please you,
Some present prompt supply. My children starve!

[*Writes.*

My wife, to find them half a meal a day,
Hath worn herself to skin and bone, and now
Can drag her limbs no more to forage for them.
Their pressing need relieve, and do with me
Whate'er thou wilt.

Ath. There!

Lew. All is noted here,
Behoveth me to heed?

Ath. No jot forgot.

I may rely upon thee?

Lew. As on one
Whose life is in thy hands.

Ath. The cards come round.

Fel. I pray you, what intend you?

Ath. He obtains

Admittance; I am on the watch, without;
She is alarm'd; I hear her cry for help;
And to her rescue naturally come.

I enter how I can, and once within,
Shape as I may the rest—assured of this,
She will accept protection; giving which,
I cast what colour on the case I please,
Insuring payment full!

Fel. Thou art the prince
Of plotters!

Ath. Thou art no less royal, there.
So hold we charge of one another's secrets;
Neither is like to break.

Enter EUSTACE and WALSHINGHAM

Eust. Lord Athunree,
I here accuse thee of a murder! and
Will undertake to justify myself,
At the point of the sword. Hast thou the courage to
Abide the trial, whereunto I, now,
Demand of thee, thou fixest time and place,
For thy defence? Lo, I repeat the charge
And challenge too—Thou art a murderer!
And I demand thou pay the penalty,
Which if I prove defaulter in exacting,
I am content to leaguer my own life.
For the third time, I charge thee with the deed!—
Of felony more capital accuse thee
Than ever caitiff on the scaffold paid
The forfeit of! A murder,—cowardly!
Unparall'd!—past human nature savage!
Wilt thou confront me?—Wilt thou? Canst thou? Darest
thou?

Ath. Doubt'st thou my answer prompt as thy demand?

Eust. Give it, and leave not room for question! Where,
And when, shall we the mortal issue try?

Ath. To-morrow!—Stay!—that gentleman thy friend?

Eust. He is.

Ath. He passes then as voucher for thee.
Yet I'll prevent miscarriage in the thing
Thy heart so earnestly is bent upon,
To its deep cost, I fear. There time and place
You see are written down.

[*Writes on the back of the paper he had first written upon.*]

Eust. For this I thank you;
That I may thoroughly be quits with you,
And all the payment on thy side be due.

Ath. Farewell! Thou art young, but yet more rash than young!

Eust. I am not rash, but by reflection act
As I do now, with hope my arm will prove
Stanch as my tongue. Thou art a murderer!

[*LORD ATHUNTREE and FELTON go out.*]

Wal. My fellow-student! Wonder hitherto
Hath tied my tongue! Has he a wrong with thee
To settle too?

Eust. He has! Let's see what time and place
He hath appointed? Ha! what's here?
Oh, Providence is here! [*Aside.*] A plot to ensnare,
In helpless ruin like to mine, the heart
In girlhood still was nearest to my own.
Then must I see thee, Hero! Pride must now
Give way to love! Occasion calls me hence,
More urgent yet than that which brought me hither.
Nor must we go together. Question, not;
But, at our place of practice, give me meeting
An hour at least ere noon.

Wal. I shall not fail.

[*Goes out.*]

Eust. Oh, what a case is mine, to wear the brand
I never merited!—to be denounced
The child of guilt, that am the daughter free—
Except the primal all-referring lapse—
Of innocence! To be amerced of that,
The loss of which might make offence a thing
To be commiserated more than blamed—
For nothing!—So!—Inconstant to him!—So!—
A wanton!—So!—The framer of a lie!—
He loves me still! I pardon all for that!
For that his tongue shall rail at me again—
Pronounce me faithless—liar—wanton—ought!
Ought that I am not, for the blessed AM
That still assures him mine! Oh, I but play
A novel part! A solitary maid,
Herself to vindicate her injured name!
No father, brother, friend to plead the cause
Of her wrong'd honour, and her baffled love!
No champion left her but a woman's arm
Back'd by a woman's heart!—yet, trusting these,

And to just Heaven appealing, resolute
 For life or death to meet the mortal strife!—
 But where is Hero? Does thy friend forget thee,
 And thou in peril? No! She flies to save thee. [*Goes out.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in Hero's House at Greenwich.*

Enter HERO.

Hero. My game the more I play successfully,
 The less my eagerness to win it grows.
 'Tis all but mine, yet thought of victory
 Sits at my heart so heavy; for defeat
 To turn up now were respite to me! respite!
 False gains are poor possessions, bringing not
 Content—the touchstone of true happiness!
 And yet I punish him! For what? for right?
 Retaliation of offended wrong!
 And yet he bears me beyond patience, hard.
 At once to throw off duty! and my slave
 To start up my dictator, that ne'er yet
 Met bended brow of man—in presence too
 Where vassal homage had awaited me!
 He should be made to bow! and once become
 My thorough captive, spurns for spurning take!
 Yet doth he raise himself, by those high thoughts
 He breathes of zeal and honour for my sex,
 The while I sink as coming short thereof!
 With this regard I fail. I must see nought
 Except my purpose—by the dread of loss
 Yet to enhance my value in his eyes,
 Propound my terms, and to the issue come
 That shows *him* foil'd, and *me* the conqueror!

Enter CLEVER.

Clever. Ma'm, he is come!

Hero. Then show him in, and mind
 What we arranged, touching those friends of mine
 I am to summon from the other room. [*CLEVER goes out.*]
 How shall I struggle through the race, wherein
 I gasp at setting out!

Enter CLEVER, showing in SIR VALENTINE.

Clever. Here is the man
 That wants to speak with thee—be careful, for
 I like his habit better than his looks.
 He minds me of some child of Satan, who
 My spirit hath offended—Watch him, Ruth,
 And advertise me if he troubleth thee.

[*Goes out.*]

Hero. Thy business, friend?

Sir Val. Dost thou not know it?

Hero. Yea!

If fits thy purpose, friend, thy habit; grave
And goodly must it be—what is its shape?
Instruction or admonishment, or what?
Unfold thee! Be it righteous and discreet,
I'll hear it as an humble sister ought.

Sir Val. Dost thou not know me?

Hero. Yea! that thou art one
Amongst the faithful—but I know not who
That one may be.

Sir Val. Not know me, sister Ruth?

Hero. Oh! is it you, friend Peter, come again
Into a new man changed!

Sir Val. So changed for thee!
My fortune I've reduced. Made o'er to thee
For purposes of heavenly charity!

Hero. Made o'er thy fortune? Could I this believe? *[Aside.*

Sir Val. My thousands, lady, have since yesterday
To hundreds dwindled, at thy will. If that
Contents thee not, but still I seem too rich,
Say but the word, the hundreds shrink to tens—
The tens to units—these again to nought,
That my fond love may win most rich reward.

Hero. I dream'd not of such love! *[Aside.*

Sir Val. My title gone.

Hero. Thy title gone!

Sir Val. Had it been costlier,
More readily it had been thrown away,
As to thy wish, whereto it gave offence,
A meeter sacrifice! Plain gentleman
Is all they rate me now! if that's too high,
I'll be plain yeoman, for thy gentle sake;
If that, low hind! aught lady, aught! to please
The wise desires, are guardians to thy love!

Hero. His title likewise gone! I have o'ershot
My mark! I'll stop!—Too late—I must go on!—
Thy work's not yet complete. Our sect, thou know'st,
Prohibits marriage, save amongst its own;
To number thee with whom, if thou inclinest
To recommend thee, it behoves thee win
Some brother's, sister's, word—such are at hand—
Wilt thou submit thee to their scrutiny?

Sir Val. At once!

Hero. But mind, whate'er they may remark,
Thou takest in silence—even in good part.
It will be scandal to me else, because
Of entertaining thee.

Sir Val. Thy will's my law.

[HERO rings.

Enter CLEVER.

Clever. Hath he misdona? Am I to put him forth?

Hero. No; brother Ephraim I wish to see,
And with him sister Grace.

Clever. They saw the man
Ascend the steps; and when he was let in,
They oped the door themselves, and vanished!
Thereto advised by his forbidding looks.
Friend Ruth, he's poison to thee. Yesterday
I lost much grace accompanying him
From London unto Greenwich, so he vex'd
My spirit by the lightness of his gait,
And mortified me, as he drew the eyes
Of flaunting damsels on him! To reform him
Is hopeless, for the more that I admonish'd,
The more did he offend; till scandalized
Beyond endurance e'en of my meek spirit,
I waver'd between option to stand still
And let him on alone; or run and leave him.
Observe moreover he's a man of wrath,—
Look at him! He could eat me up—yea, eat me
Like to a ravening lion a poor lamb!
Ne'er judged I looks of man—if inwardly
He does not bite his lips! Be sure he swears!
Yea, he blasphemeth!—Get him from thy doors!
Eject him from them! Into the highway with him!
Heed not if night or day—in sun or rain—
Or lose thy place among the faithful, Ruth!
Umph!

[*Goes out.*]

Hero. They reject thee—yea, thou see'st they do!
Yea, they reject thee!

Sir Val. Do not thou the same!
Oh, let me talk to thee in my soul's speech—
List! I have staked my life on winning thee!
Not in my own breath, but in thine I live!
My portion in the sun, the earth, and all
The affluence from their copartnery
Derived, I have made o'er to thee, nor now
Except by thy vouchsafing can enjoy!
Am I to live or die? Nay, think before
Thou speak'st, and those fair thoughts to council call,
Yet richer than the sumptuous palace which
They make their proud sojourn! So like to Heaven,
Hast not its ruth, that makes us daily bless
Its governance? Thou hast!—and as thou hast,
Let it beam down its influence on me,
And save thy worshipper! Thou lett'st me kneel—
Sure then—O! sure I do not kneel in vain.

Hero. Rise up! These proofs of honest passion quite
Confound me.

[*Aside*]

Sir Val. Hear me! O, the world! the world,
That's made up of two hearts! That is the sun
It moves around! There is the verdure! There
The flower! the fruit! The spring and autumn field,

Which in the reaping grows! the mine that, work'd,
Accumulates in riches—ever free
From influences of the changing stars,
Or aught, save that which sits above them higher
Than they above the globe!—Come! make with me
E'en such a heavenly world.

Hero. Beseech thee, rise!

Sir Val. In hope?

Hero. In hope! What did I say?

Sir Val. Thou saidst—

Thou badest me rise in hope. [*Rises.*] Thy heart is moved.

Hero. 'Tis touch'd.

Sir Val. And nothing more?

Hero. Perhaps a little.

Sir Val. How may I call that little? what's its name—

If haply of the kind I'd have it be,

'Gainst all I've thrown away, and ten times more,

I'd set it—Lady, tell me, what's its name?

Oh, deal magnanimously with me, nor

What 'tis not wrong to feel, when *thou* canst feel it,

Believe 'tis wrong to speak! Frankly! couldst love me?

Hero. Frankly, I could.

Sir Val. Once more, be frank—and dost thou?

Hero. Frankly, I do.

Sir Val. I said, "once more be frank,"—

Yet must I say once more be frank again.

Hero. And if thou dost, I will be frank again.

Sir Val. Wilt take me for thy husband?

Hero. There's my hand,

If no impediment forbids thee, clasp it.

Sir Val. None.

Hero. Soft—I'll do it! 'Twill be a sweet revenge! [*Aside.*

A thought has struck me. Thou hast loved a damsel,

My likeness it should seem—and one know I,

Who, to the vision, so resembles me,

In her I see myself; nor can the ear

That hears us, well determine which is which,

In pitch and tone our voices so are one.

The damsel thou affectedst may be she—

Her name is Hero Sutton.

Sir Val. 'Tis the same.

Hero. Another thought now strikes me. Is the name

Thou gavest to me thy real one? Alas!

Thy colour mounteth! It is clear! Thou art

Sir Valentine de Grey? Alas! alas!

Your leave to be alone!

Sir Val. Are you not well?

Hero. O, yes; I'm very well. Good e'en! Quite well!

Well as a woman can be, when she finds,

Too late, she rashly gave her heart away

To one, whose value for the gift will be,

Soon as he proves 'tis his, to bid her keep it.

Sir Val. To bid her keep it !

Hero. As Hero Sutton rues !

Sir Val. She never gave
Her heart to me !

Hero. She did ! you know not when
A woman gives away her heart ! At times
She knows it not herself ! Insensibly
It goes from her ! She thinks she hath it still—
If she reflects—while smoothly runs the course
Of wooing ; but if haply comes a check—
An irrecoverable—final one—
Aghast—forlorn—she starts, to find it lost,
And with it, all the world !

Sir Val. No maid could love,
And act as she.

Hero. How did she act ?

Sir Val. I told thee.

She danced to please a libertine ; and pain
A man of honour—one who worshipp'd her.

Hero. She danced to please no man but thee ! Your
eyes,

She thought upon her, did alone inspire her
In the measure. Thorough conquest of the heart,
She thought was all *but* hers, she hoped to make ;
And so, with all her soul endeavouring,
She lost it all, and with it all herself !

Sir Val. If she had told me this—

Hero. If she had told !

When, pray thee ?—where ? or how ?—didst name a place,
Or time, to hear her vindicate herself ?

Didst even hint it to her ? In a breath,
You doubted, tried, condemn'd, and sentenced ; nor
'Fore witnesses didst pity her to spare her !

They should beware, who charges lay in love,
On solid grounds they make them ! for, there are hearts
So proudly fond, that, wrong them, there, they'll break
Or ever they will stoop to right themselves.

Much such a one is hers ; and yet, with all
Her pride—for strong as that, more strong her love—
She trusts to win thee still.

Sir Val. To win me still !

She gave me up, without a sigh or word.

Hero. So had I given thee up, had I been she—
And yet I love thee.

Sir Val. See me at thy feet !

Hero. I can't, with thought how thou hast knelt at hers.

Sir Val. Nay, hear me, but in pity.

Hero. She in pity

Heard thee ! and much it profited her !—much !

She now, it seems, may sue !

Sir Val. I swear to thee
Eternal constancy !

Hero. Thy witnesses,
Thy oaths to her!

Sir Val. Where are the smiles just now
That beam'd upon me?

Hero. Quench'd by Hero's tears.

Sir Val. By Hero's tears! She never wept for me!

Hero. She show'd thee not her tears; but what of that?
Her eyes might rain, and thou not see a drop.
I know they did so.

Sir Val. Let me hold thy hand.

Hero. Never, till her thou hast wrong'd, thou offerest
To right. The world return to, thou wouldst quit
It seems for me. Resume its habit; hie
To Hero Sutton's, whom I shall advise
To look for thee to-morrow eve. Repeat
What I have said to thee. If she denies
What I aver, be free to come to me,
And welcome too! If she acknowledges,
The hand of her, whose heart thou hast purloin'd,
Behoves thee ask and take

Sir Val. Yet hear me!

Hero. Nay!

These are the terms on which we break or meet.

Sir Val. If she rejects me?

Hero. Then will Ruth be thine.

Sir Val. If she accepts me?

Hero. Then, still thine, Ruth dies! [*They go out severally.*]

SCENE III.—*An Anti-Room leading into Hero's Chamber
in the same house.*

Enter LEWSON, from the Window.

Lew. Safe! Safe!—all silent! What has turn'd my feet
From flesh to lead? My body, which to bear
Their function is, appears to drag them on.
I wot not thus to feel. Ferrying across
From Limehouse now, I saved a drowning man.
Twice had he sunk in sight of his young brood,
That with their dam kept fluttering on the shore.
O, how they bless'd me! while the standers by
Echoed them, and to all inquirers said,
That ask'd who saved him, "Yonder's the good man!"
And I afoot to do an evil act!
Another should have saved him! Let it pass!
Is this her chamber? No, her dressing-room.
Ay, here's her woman's gear. What holds this case?
Her paint, I'll warrant—her cosmetics—ought
To give another skin; they're ne'er content
With nature's; patches, perfumes, dentifrice!
A book?—I'll wager one she durst not show!

A Bible! Umph! Strange reading that, methinks,
 For a fine lady! Here's a leaf turn'd down;
 What says the place? It seems to talk to me!
 I'll read no further! So—what have we here?
 Her letters! Excellent! Her letters!—now
 To see how they can look and talk the saint,
 And play the sinner, still! A hundred pounds,
 The first is an amour!—A wretch's prayer
 For help—herself and children without food
 For two whole days! What, baggage! beg ere rob?
 Wait for a thaw, and see thy little ones
 Congeal to death i' the icy world!—With the thought,
 I have a feeling how the tiger's fangs
 Rend for her cubs the prey!—What alms didst hope
 Her ladyship would give?—What would suffice
 The dressing of her gown she wears a night
 And casts aside, for foul! What's here—is this
 Her answer—or the copy on't? Indeed!
 Ay, when she gives she gives! She seems to think
 That poverty, like plenty, is made up
 Of flesh and blood. There's food for dam and whelps
 For a whole week—The letter's to my wife!
 She dined to-day,—fall to't—fall to't—thy brood
 May gorge them now! Methinks I see them feed!
 Heaven bless her!—What! Heaven bless her, did I say?
 Then, what do I do here? No more of this!
 I've work to do, chimes not with thoughts like these.
 No more on't! Footsteps!—So—Beast to thy lair.

[*Conceals himself.*]

Enter HERO; she goes to the window, and looks out.

Hero. Whether mine eye with a new spirit sees,
 Or nature is grown lovelier, I know not;
 But ne'er, methinks, was sunset half so sweet!
 He's down, and yet his glory still appears,
 Like to the memory of a well-spent life,
 That's golden to the last, and when 'tis o'er,
 Shines in the witnesses it leaves behind.
 They say, a ruddy sunset a fair day!
 Oh! may it be a day without a cloud,
 Which of my fate beholds the clearing up;
 That I may quote it, ever, as a sign
 Of sincere fortune, often as I say
 Was ever day so bright! How calm is all—
 How calm am I!—Would every breast I knew
 Were lodge to heart so tranquil,—There was one—
 A most strange history! Is she alive,
 Or dead? [*EUSTACE appears at the window.*] Who's there?

Eust. [*Entering.*] A friend!

Hero. Help!

Eust. Hush! I come

For safety!

Hero. To thyself?

Eust. To thee! Look here,—
Lest I should miss thee, I prepared this scroll.
More brief 'twill tell my errand, than my tongue
Could do't.

Hero. [*Reads.*] Lord Athunree!—This very night!
My house beset!—myself by force abstracted!

Eust. If thou hast kindred in the neighbourhood,
Or friend thou canst rely upon, forthwith
Of thy immediate danger caution them,
By hands you can confide in—for my pains,
I pray you pay me with the only audience
Of some poor moments, when I'll take my leave.

Hero. [*To herself.*] I need not fear him! On his o'ercast
brow

'Tis grief, not guilt, that lowers.—A minute's patience.
I shall rejoin you.

[*Goes out.*]

Eust. Thou art happy, Hero,
And she that loves thee, weeps—but not that thou
Art happy! Thy fair fortune is the likeness
Of what was once my own! It is a face
Reminds me of a valued friend that's lost,
And which I bless, the while it makes me weep!

Hero. [*Re-entering.*] What you advised, I've done—and
now your pleasure?

Eust. Have I your leave, I'll sit. I've used some haste—
Am somewhat out of breath—I thank you! So!
Pray you be seated, too. You've had your share
Of friends?—Your 'haviour's of the winning kind,
That goodness sweetens!—You are frank—You love
Another's weal more than you envy it—
And such a one makes friends.—'Mongst those you've found,
You surely some must miss, else was your fate
Past earthly blessing happy?

Hero. I've lost friends.

Eust. By—death?

Hero. By death.

Eust. And any by misfortune?

Hero. Misfortune!—No, not any.

Eust. [*Rising.*] What!—not one?
Good night!

Hero. What mean you? Do you take me for
A season friend, no stancher than the bird,
Whose time the sun appoints to come and go,
And's with us when 'tis summer?—Oh, you wrong me!
What!—I to love, as loves that summer bird
The land he makes his gay sojourning in,
My friend, because 'tis leaf and blossom time!
Indeed you wrong me!—Knew I, at this moment,
One cheek I loved, was beggar'd of its smiles—
Not one left to it—I vow to thee, the next—
If back'd my power my will, *before* the next—

My own should be its neighbour.—Oh! how much
You wrong me!

Eust. Glad I am I've done thee wrong—
In sooth, I am—and yet I wrong'd thee not,
I only miss'd thy meaning! Hadst not a friend
Misfortune lost thee?—not that thou shunnedst her,
But that her heavy and most strange affliction
To thee and all her sex forbade her access?

Hero. A friend?—a sister! What a fate was hers!
Of all I valued, she the being was
I least could measure worth with. Of all grace,
The pattern was she—person, features, mind,
Heart, everything, as nature had essay'd
To frame a work which none might find a flaw in!
And yet 'tis said, she fell—and if she did,
Let none be sure they'll stand! She couldn't fall!
There's such a thing as purity on earth,
And if she fell, there could be no such thing!
She didn't fall!—No! No!—I knew her, or
I never knew myself! Virtue with her
Was not a lesson we must con before
'Tis learn'd by heart; it was a portion of her,
Much as her stature, feature, shape, or voice,
Which, saving nature's, hand ne'er gave to her.
She has been outraged, slander'd—aught—but lost!
She could not fall—she did not—could not fall!
What ails thee?

Eust. He that sets a banquet down
To famish'd lips, serves poison, and not meat,
For, ten to one, the greedy guest will die.
Yet blesses he the host, as I bless thee,
That spread'st for me this feast!

Hero. This feast; What feast?
Move not thy lips thus impotently, or
I'll think thou diest indeed! What feast dost mean?
Is't one the heart makes? 'Tis—Thine eyes discourse
Language 'twould tax a hundred tongues to speak!
In wonder's name, who art thou? Say thou'rt not
What thou appear'st, I'll tell thee who thou art!
Could I not do't?—Could I not?—Helen?—What?
Well?—Am I right?—If ever thou valuedst
The homage of this breast, ne'er fear to claim it!
'Tis thine!—all!—all!—demand it!—take it!—come!—
'Tis thine as e'er it was!—Well?

Eust. [*Rising, but unable from emotion, to advance.*] Hero!

Hero. Nay,
I'll bring it to thee, then! That's right—weep on!
My sweet!—my dear! my poor! my wrong'd one!—yes,
Wrong'd—wrong'd—I say't again! Thou need'st not speak,
Thou hast not strength—thou'lt sleep with me to-night?—
To-morrow for thy story.

Helen. Nay, to-night.

I'm more myself again!—Let it be so—

Sit down a while. How hast thou been, my Hero

Hero. Well, sweet, most well!

Helen. Now by the love

Thou bear'st me, interrupt me not; but hear

My story out. Thou hast been told, that from

A roof which shelters aught but innocence,

In company with one, whom innocence,

That would be safe, should shun; i' the face of day,

Thy friend was seen to issue. Thither, by

A forg'd tale of misery, alone

She was decoy'd—exposed to outrage there—

Rescued by him—by him conducted thence—

Met in the street ere well her foot had left

The threshold—countenance refused her tale

By him that could have vouch'd its truth—by *him*

Her tale discredited, whose credence was

Life! happiness! all but honour! In a word,

Her virtue blasted, that had ne'er known blight—

Denounced as canker'd—rotten—while was sound

As thy own, Hero!—even, as thy own!

Hero. I know't.

Helen. You know't? Alas, you know it not—you *think it*—
Think it in the teeth of damning fact. It is

Your love!—your charity! An alms—an alms—

Is all that friend so kind as even thou

Can render now to Helen—Yet I'll be righted!

But fare thee well—'tis late!

Hero. You'll stay with me?

Helen. What! let me press thy pure sheets, Hero, with
A tainted name? How I have wrong'd thee!—Wouldst

Believe't? I once came to thy door—but there

I stopp'd. I was not wont to ask for leave

To enter it, and I must ask for't now!

I left thy door again—the certainty

To see it never ope thy friend prefer'd

To but the chance to see it shut upon her!

Hero. To out the chance to see it shut on thee!

What warrant ever gave I for such chance?

Oh! had it wider, freer oped than e'er,

It only had anticipated what

Its mistress' arms had done—what now they do!

You shall not leave—nay, in sooth you shall not!

Helen. In this attire, think, should I here be seen—

Hero. I'll think of nought, but that thou now art here.
But that thou here shalt stay. Thou canst be gone

At dawn. Thou know'st a thousand things I have

To ask of thee—how we shall meet again?—

Where I shall find thee?—what thy projects are—

Deny me not, I pray thee! 'Twill but make

The greater beggar of me—Come!—You can,

You must—you will—this is my chamber—Come! [*They go out.*]

Lew. [*Entering in disorder.*] I cannot do't! Heaven's on the watch against it!

'Tis said it guards the good, and if it does,
Its spirits sure are here—They are!—or why
This fearful awe come over me? I feel
As eyes were on me, that I cannot see—
Above me, lips that speak but are unheard—
And hands around me, with a thousand times
The power of flesh and blood, though sightless as
The air! Heaven will not have it be—It sets
Before mine eyes, the fruit of what I've done—
To warn me back from what I've come to do—
That hapless maiden owes her injured name
To me! I was the instrument to ruin her!
To fix on her the wanton's brand, that ne'er
In thought it seems incurr'd the wanton's stain!
To damn in this world, what i' the next is blest
Oh! heavy sin—Go sin no more! How's this?
Go sin no more! So said the book to me.
Then Heaven cares for sinners, it should seem!
O blessed book! I'll go and sin no more!
The chime! It lacks a quarter of an hour—
The very clock would save me. Was't the hour,
They'd have me in their fearful toils again!
Away! away! speed feet, while ye are free,
Softly and swift—the minutes fly! Away!

[*Exit.*]

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—HERO'S Town House.

Enter SIR WILLIAM SUTTON and EMILY.

Sir Wil. What! Helen Mowbray come to life again?

Emily. 'Tis even so! and metamorphosed as
You ne'er would dream. But pray you, use despatch.
On the reverse of this she gave your niece;
And which, unthinkingly, no doubt, was given
To her, 'tis clear some mortal work's on hand—
For here are time; and place, and weapon named,
Upon the part of base Lord Athunree.
There yet is time! Prevent it, while you may!

Sir Wil. [*Rings the bell. Attendant enters.*] Hark, sir!
Take charge of this, and have it straight
Put into execution by the chief
O' the city officers—Look to it well!

And now, what means this full assembly call'd
Of friends and relatives, to feast with Hero?

Emily. I must not tell—but guess.

Sir Wil. I cannot guess
The shapes particular of women's fancies,
Especially in one of Hero's vein.
Retains she her disguise?

Emily. No; casts it off—
And with it, habit, more a part of her.
She is changed beyond belief.

Sir Wil. Not my belief,
When I shall see it.

Emily. I must hie to her,
And set her mind at rest on this affair,
Touching her friend, which chance reveal'd to her,
In time, I trust, the issue to prevent.
You have given order they be hither brought?

Sir Wil. I have. Where's Hero?

Emily. In the library,
In earnest converse still with that strange man,
Who pray'd an audience with her, and I think,
Brought news that has surprised her. Dinner-time.
Will see an end and clearing up of all.

[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE II.—*The Outskirts of London.*

*Enter WALSINGHAM and HELEN (still in the disguise of
EUSTACE).*

Wal. Not yet arrived!

Helen. 'Tis 'fore the time.

Wal. How feel you?

Helen. Collected, and myself.

Wal. You look so. Clear

Your 'haviour, as this day of trial only

The ordinary mate of yesterday,

You'll win!

Helen. I shall!—I am resolved to win.

Wal. Show me thy sword.

Helen. I cannot draw it, but
My life must follow.

Wal. How?

Helen. It is my heart—

This which I wear, is nothing. Call it steel,

'Tis steel!—a straw, it even is a straw!

Its stamina not lodging in itself,
But in the heart that wields it.

Wal. This is calmness
Upon the eve of combat!

Helen. Walsingham,
There is a kind of nature that clears up

The instant it confronts a trying thing.
In common evils, hesitates and fears ;
In ill's of moment, shows sedate resolve.

Wal. Why, that is woman's proper contradiction.

Helen. It passes for't ; but sometimes 'bides in man,
Not therein less of his high caste deserving,
'Though so resembling woman ! Think'st not so ?

Wal. Assuredly.

Helen. You see this mood is mine,

Nor was I on my guard to let it out—

'Twill lose me credit with you. Best have pass'd

For Sir Redoubtable any day o' the year !

You more had thought of me.

Wal. No !

Helen. You say I am calm ?

I am so—that is, as to the issue of

This mortal meeting—for 'tis mortal !—but

I have a trouble, and—wilt thou believe me—

'Tis touching thee !—It grieves me, Walsingham,

To leave thee an abuséd man behind me !

What late thou told'st me I have ponder'd well,

And thereon founded arguments, methinks,

More solid, than I urg'd on you before.

They are here—your poor friend's legacy to you !

[*Gives a paper.*]

Stop !—You're about to speak—Don't speak as yet.

If I should fall, you pledge your gentle word,

My body you will have direct convey'd

Unto the lady's I have herein named.

[*Gives another paper:*

Deliver'd to her custody—her *own* !

Nor until then, one fastening, fold, loop, thread

O' the vesture, thou wilt suffer be disturb'd—

No, not to search, or probe, or stanch a wound,

Or settle whether I'm alive or dead,

Or anything ! To this, thou pledgest thee ?

Wal. Dear boy, I do !

Helen. Another thing—

Wal. What is't ?

Thou pausest, as in doubt I'll grant it thee.

Whate'er it be, I swear to do it.

Helen. Ha !

Then hast thou set my heart indeed at rest !

Mind, thou hast sworn to do't. Revenge me not !

That comprehendeth all ! Don't speak again,

Till I have done, quite done. Thou lovest me ?

Wal. I do.

Helen. How much ?

Wal. As never man before !

Helen. Speak not of love gone by, but present love.

With those thou lovest now, how rates thy love ?

Wal. As first.

Helen. As first of all ?

Wal. Of all!

Helen. All friends?

Not one before me?

Wal. No!

Helen. Not one?

Wal. Not one!

Helen. And all love told?

Wal. All love—but love itself!

Helen. Shake hands!—We'll say good bye before they come,
Lest there arrive occasion, and no time;
Good bye!—Oh, happy women, that are friends!

They may embrace—men cannot do so,

Wal. Yes,

When they are brothers.

Helen. Feel'st thou as my brother?

I feel as I were thine.

Wal. My boy! my boy;

[*Embracing HELEN.*]

Heaven!—but thou faint'st!

Helen. No!—Are they coming!—Heaven

Reward thee, for thy precious love of me!

They are at hand—Good bye!

Wal. Show me thy sword!

'Tis somewhat longer, I believe, than mine,

And I would try the depth of yonder stream,

In case we need to wade it.

[*Goes out, and returns without the sword.*]

It has slipp'd,

And gone down to the bottom!—Boy, your quarrel's mine;

To humour thee, alone, I gave consent

To second thee. What!—Stand, aside, with broad

And lusty breast and sinewy arm, and see

Thy stripling form the deadly point oppose,

In the athletic villain's practised hand;

Instead of grasping thee with loving force,

Like to a doting father his boy-son,

Or elder brother his dear younger one,

Taking thy place, and swinging thee away!

No, boy! Before thy young veins part a drop

Of their rich streams, my channels shall run dry!

Helen. Is this fair, Walsingham?

Wal. Yet, hear me on!

I find I could not live without thee; so

Guarding thy life I but protect my own.

That's fair—That's rational—That's sound in nature!

Want'st further reason?—I will give it thee—

Thou art like her!

Helen. Whom?

Wal. Boy, hast thou read my soul—

Have I turn'd o'er its every page to thee—

Love, hate, hope, doubt, possession, loss, bliss, pain,

Contentment and despair—and in each one

Shown thee one all-pervading cause enwrit,

For nothing? Whom could I compare thee to,
 But her—the heroine of my sad story?
 Whom much thy face resembles! Hast thou never
 Remark'd me gazing in abstraction on thee,
 As though, upon perusal of thy features,
 While seem'd mine eye intent, my soul was poring
 Upon some other thing?—I have done it oft—
 Will do it once again! Your eyes are hers,
 In form and hue, but sunk; a darkness too,
 Not heavy, yet enough to make a cloud,
 Sits—not disparagingly though—'neath thine;
 Hers were two starry brilliants, set in pearl!
 The outline of the nose is quite the same,
 But that of thine is sharper—'tis thy sex.
 The mouth is very like—oh, very like!
 But there's a touch—a somewhat deep one too—
 Of bitterness.—The cast of hers was sweetness,
 Enlocking full content. The cheek is not
 At all alike!—'tis high; and lank below;
 And sallow—not a dimple in't—all contrast
 To the rich flower'd and velvet lawn of hers.
 But though thou art not she, entire—thou art
 Enough of her to make me love thee, boy!
 With such a brother-love, as brother, never,
 I dare be bound, for brother felt before!
 I spoke not of thy hair—It is a wood
 Run wild compared to hers, and thrice as deep
 I' the shade—Yet, you are very like her!—quite
 Enough, to make me pour my heart's blood out
 As water, for thy sake!—They are at hand!

Helen. Then let me be at least thy sword-bearer;
 And when thou need'st the steel, I'll keep the sheath
 Which in thy motions would embarrass thee!

Wal. Take it, and thank thee!

Enter LORD ATHUNREE and FELTON.

Ath. We are late for you, sirs;
 But not, I think, for time.

Wal. You are in time.

Helen. Draw off, till, with his second, I arrange
 Preliminaries—which I know are wont,
 In questions of this kind. What we decide,
 I shall possess you of; and then proceed.
 Sir, let us speak. You know me, principal.
 My place my second would, perforce, usurp.
 Permit him not, as you're a gentleman!
 You see he is unarm'd—your rapier draw,
 When I draw this, and keep him well aloof.
 You promise this?

Fel. I do! [*Aside.*] It keeps the odds
 Upon our side!

Helen. [*Drawing.*] Lord Athunree, I am ready!

Fel. [*Drawing and opposing* WALSINGHAM.] Stand back, sir,
at your peril!

Wal. Ha!—the boy
Has baffled, and outwitted me! [*Advances.*

Fel. Stand back!
I bar all interruption to the game
We are summon'd here to play.

Wal. A coward act,
To draw upon a naked man!

Fel. My lord!
Why draw you not and he his weapon out?
Proceed, my lord, at once!

Ath. Before I do,
I ask, and I must learn, in name of whom
The urchin has arraign'd and challenged me.
I fight not, till I know upon what cause.

Helen. The cause of Helen Mowbray!

Wal. Drop your hand,
And let me pass!—or sure as that's a sword
My heart is on your point!

Ath. Spite of thyself,
Another minute grant I thee to live.
I will not draw, until I know thy name.

Helen. Mowbray!

Ath. Her brother?

Helen. Anything you please,
Caitiff without a parallel in crime!

Wal. A brother!—Hold! Lord Athunree! Look, sir,
[*To FELTON.*

A moment give I thee, to take thy choice
'Twixt murdering me, or suffering to pass!
Why, what care I for life!

[*Rushes upon FELTON, and wrests the sword from him.*

At the same moment, Officers and Servants enter.

First Officer. Hold! Stop!—Proceed
At your peril! You are all our prisoners, sirs;
Sir William Sutton's warrant makes you so,
Which here I show to you. Surrender, then,
And to his niece's bear us company.

[*They all go out. WALSINGHAM and HELEN last, who
stop a little behind the rest.*

Wal. Thou hast kill'd me, boy! How couldst thou
do so!
Or keep from one, who loved thee as I do,
A secret like to this? Her brother—so!
Her brother!—I shall love thee better still—
And better yet—yet not so well as her! [*They follow.*

SCENE III.—*The Street.**Enter* SIR VALENTINE.

Sir Val. Spite of my failing heart, thus far I've come
 With love to urge me, love to waive me back,
 My duty tender'd, fortune made or lost—
 Not tender'd, absolutely lost—no chance
 Permitted me to win! 'Tis Hero's form
 With the fair essence—match for thing so fair!—
 To Hero's form, without! It is a whole,
 Past calculation rich, against a part,
 And that the poorest—yet consummate rich,
 And I must play for both, or neither win!
 Or winning one, the other quite forego!
 It cannot be she loves me! Hero love me!
 A prideful pleasure kindles at the thought—
 But comes the gentle Ruth, and puts it out
 With genial brightness of bland nature, as
 The sun a little fire. O sun most fair,
 I richer were ne'er to have known thy light
 Than knowing it to lose it. Ne'er did man
 Draw lots with chances more opposed than mine.
 A little moment I am made or lost;
 Lost past retrieving—past addition made!
 Then must I, like a desperate gamester, on!
 Throw fear of loss aside—though loss of all—
 And think of nothing but the chance of gain
 That makes me rich for life!—past affluence! [*Goes out.*]

SCENE LAST.—*A Room in Hero's House.*

SIR WILLIAM SUTTON *seated in the centre*—WALSINGHAM,
 HELEN, LORD ATHUNREE, FELTON, *Officers, &c.*

Sir Wil. Lord Athunree, charged with intent, thou stand'st
 To break the peace of our right sovereign lord
 The king. What answer'st? Or refusest
 To plead?—Is this thy hand?—Wilt answer that?
 Whose'er it is, it is a villain's, lord!
 For the same writer that arranged a fray
 Had plann'd a felony—in danger put
 A lady's jewelry, so rich to her—
 Not all the caskets of the proudest line
 Of noble dames, pour'd out into one heap,
 Could make a blaze to match it!

Ath. [*Aside.*] Curse my haste
 For such remissness, on the back to write
 Of the instructions first I pencill'd down
 To give the caitiff wretch—whose guess'd miscarriage
 Is now accounted for!

Sir Wil. Lord Athunree,

How say you ?

Ath. For the combat you have marr'd,

My silence or denial nought avails.

You found me in the act. The challenger

You need to seek elsewhere.—I am not he.

Wal. Sir William, he says right.—He challenged not ;

But he such provocation gave, as makes

The challenger more the challenged.—He had stain'd

A lady's credit, bringing it to naught,

Or causing it to pass for nothing more ;

Which trespass, capital, her brother here—

In form a stripling, but in mind a man—

Indeed demanded reparation for,

Which to exact, my arm assay'd, but fail'd—

For I had woo'd, and won, and, as I thought,

Alone engaged the maid. Sir William, try,

If from that sacred seat of justice, voice

Of solemn adjuration can avail

To bring the truth to light—first, if the maid

Fell—the knowledge he, alone, of the truth,

Possessing.

Sir Wil. No, sir ! Another

Can vouch she never fell !

Wal. She never fell ?

O, ponder what you say !—Not rashly—O,

Not rashly raise a wretch from the abyss

Into the light, to cast him in again

On darkness heaving darkness ! *Now*, I faint

With the day-flood that seems to burst upon me !

I say, “that seems,” for such transition mocks

The doting of belief !—or heard I right ?

Or knew'st thou what thou saidst ? or, knowing it,

Knew'st thou didst speak on grounds of solid footing.

Something akin to rock ?—It should be rock.

Itself, to bear the fabric thou dost raise

Against the sea of doubts that surges on it !

O did she never fall ? Did love itself

Take sides with hate to do her hateful wrong ?

To blast her—to abandon her—and leave her

A prey to haggard fortune—death or madness ?

Sir Wil. Collect thyself, and further audience lend,

Or bid me hold my tongue. The maiden lives.

Wal. Lives ? Lives ? Is innocent, perhaps, and loves ;

O does she ?

Sir Wil. Yes.

Wal. Thou seem'st to know what makes

My all, or naught of being ! Innocent,

And lives and loves ?

Ath. First prove her innocent.

Sir Wil. He cannot ! what of that ?—Another can !

Ath. Produce that other.

[*SIR WILLIAM beckons—LEWSON enters.*

Lew. Here he is.

Ath. Betrayed!

Wal. He hath confess'd—take notice all! The lips
That blurr'd fair Helen's name hath oped themselves,
To damn themselves, and do the maiden right!

Sir Wil. No need confession from that riven wretch!
To that abhorréd house thou saw'st her quit,
A letter, as from one she knew and loved,
In mortal strait enticed her. There, assail'd
With show of violence from this same man,
That lord premeditated succour brought her,
The whole his foul contrivance! You may leave!
You are known!—What penalty the law awards
For such default, be sure, shall be exacted!

Ath. Exacted? I defy you! Do your worst! [*Goes out.*

[*HELEN swooning, is caught by WALSINGHAM.*

Sir Wil. Look to thy mistress, Walsingham.

Wal. Where is she?—

I nothing see except this fainting boy,
Whom help me to restore.

Sir Wil. To wake him up,
Breathe in his ear the name thou lovest most!
Throw back those ebon clusters thoroughly,
And consciousness will start upon thee straight,
Thou never dream'dst of, and thou shalt confess
That love, howe'er it hath a jealous eye,
Hath not a piercing one.

Wal. Herself!—my own!
My sweet!—my idolized!—my innocent
Helen!—her eyelids quiver—Helen! Helen!
They ope! Dost thou not know me, love? Revive!
Die not away again! Core of my life!
Helen—my gentle one! My patient one!
My faithful one, unwarp'd by rudest strain!
My loving one!—More loving—yes, I say it
That love thee best—more loving yet than loved!
Look at me! Answer me! This semblance but
Of death, is death itself to me! 'Tis I—
'Tis Walsingham!—'Tis I—repentingly,
Humbly, imploring thee to speak to him,
To look upon him—pity him!—forgive him!

Helen. I love thee, Walsingham. Have all thou ask'st
In that one little word! [*They retire.*

SIR VALENTINE enters.

Sir Wil. Sir Valentine!

Sir Val. The same, Sir William Sutton.

Sir Wil. You are welcome.

Sir Val. In strait where things like life and death depend,

Suspense is but the rack—I'll know my fate!

Sir William Sutton, I am come to crave

An audience of your niece.

Sir Wil. Apprise my niece

Sir Valentine de Grey would speak with her.

Sir Val. At thought of sight of that proud form again,
Old motions in me stir—but only stir.

Come thought of Ruth—they are, at once, at rest!

HERO enters, most magnificently attired.

O what a tower of grace and loveliness,
And stateliness, and absolute command,
She bursts upon mine eyes! Were't tenanted
As I would have it!

Hero. Well, Sir Valentine!

Your will?

Sir Val. I come a promise to redeem,
Thou'lt think most strange, as I do, though I made it,
A suit I have, the gain or loss of which
Depends on thee, although to thee not pleaded!

Shall I be pardon'd, who, against my will,

Past sufferance presume?

Hero. Not mine! Say on.

Sir Val. It is the voice of Ruth! I wonder not
At that—but breathing Ruth's benignity!

Hero. Shall I *entreat* thee say thy wish?

Sir Val. More bland

The accents yet! Can Ruth have told me right,

And does she love me?

Hero. Sir, 'tis painful to me
To mark such hesitation, when, to have,
You only have to ask; and, asking, do
A pleasure—giving leave to pleasure you.

Sir Val. [*Aside.*] No strain hath love, if this be not its
mood.

I win her, and am lost! Yet lose with gain!

Sir Wil. My niece awaits your question.

Hero. Uncle, peace.

Give him his time—the measure on't his will!

To look for pleasure is itself a pleasure.

But half they feast who to a feast sit down

The moment it is named. Say, that he wait

An hour, why then, so much I banquet more,

And yet fall to with relish.

Sir Val. O such words

To fall from Hero's lips a month before!

Come certainty, whate'er along with it!

Dost thou affect me?

Hero. Yes, Sir Valentine.

Sir Val. Wilt take me for thy husband?

Hero. Yes, again.

Sir Val. Good bye, sweet Ruth!

Hero. Strange welcome this!

Sir Val. Good bye

To sweet content of modest happiness!

Lady, my title's gone!

Hero. For that receive

More hearty welcome than thou gav'st to me.

Sir Val. My fortune dwindled.

Hero. As it sinks, you rise.

For that receive more hearty welcome yet.

Sir Val. My tastes are alter'd.

Hero. Tell me what their kind,

They shall be mine—whate'er thy taste, rank, state,

My state, my rank, my tastes, shall be the same!

Sir Val. Then must we wed.—O for that plumed tiar,

The simple hood!—that costly lace, the coif

Close-pinn'd and modest—clear!—that gorgeous dress,

The gown embroider'd with humility!

Hero. They are donn'd at thy command, and these cast off.

Sir Val. And canst thou, too, the vesture of the mind
That made thee cherish these, cast off?

Hero. I can!

Hard things which love cannot for love perform.

Sir Val. Such bounty should enrich.—Alas! for me,

Who, spite of all its granting, must be poor.

Clever. [Entering.] Friend Ruth, the dinner waits.—Friend
Peter here!

And to the world, like thee, gone back again!

Then change of gear for me! Bold serving-man,

Who would be other than his betters are!

No more, friend Obadiah—know me hence

For Master Clever, name and nature one!

Sir Val. Have I but dreamt 'tis night, and is it day!

A masque is it, I have been acting in,

And known it not? Canst thou be both, yet one?

Is Ruth but Hero—Hero none but Ruth?

Then welcome Hero for the sake of Ruth,

And Ruth more welcome yet for Hero's sake!

And is it so?—or does the fable end

In cold return to dull reality?

Hero. No; in reality that's born of it

And is its fairer likeness!—real grown

What first was only seeming. I have become

The part, I lately play'd; the thing I was

Before, have ceased to be! Such virtue hath

The only show of virtue! For which change

Thy noble nature do I thank, although

Perhaps, with more than prudent jealousy,

Exacting; and precipitate, where patience

Might well have counsell'd pause. With Hero's form,

Take Ruth's contentment and humility—

Their dress, whate'er your love would have it be!

But here is one unchanged, nor needing change, [To HELEN.
Except where seeming goes for next to naught!
My Helen! thou art happy now!

Helen. I am!

Wal. And I, that scarce deserve my happiness!
But what shall make me misbeliever hence?
How could I doubt thee! Strong appearances
By stronger vouchers back'd, it was, that made me.
But that detected now—and these explain'd—
Thy virtue rises like a pyramid
I wonder aught could hide!—A life of trust
Shall for a season of misgiving pay thee!
Yet more I have to say—of that anon—
For guests are here you thought not of, before,
On whom your feast that waits for us depends—
Marr'd, if disrelish'd,—made, if they're content!

END OF WOMAN'S WIT.

THE
MAID OF MARIENDORPT:

A Play,

IN FIVE ACTS.

—◆—
DEDICATION.

9th October, 1838.

MY DEAR SIR,

Permit me to inscribe this Drama to the man whose spontaneous good offices of anxious confiding friendship have essentially facilitated the prosecution of my literary labours, during a protracted period of peculiar difficulty.

Your attached and faithful Servant,

J. S. KNOWLES.

TO EDWARD COOPER, ESQ.

33, Piccadilly.

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT THE HAYMARKET IN 1838.)

<i>General Kleiner</i>	Governor of Prague,	Mr. STRICKLAND.
<i>Baron Idenstein</i>	his Nephew	Mr. WALTER LACY.
<i>Lieutenant of the Castle</i>		Mr. BISHOP.
<i>Joseph</i>	{ a Jew, friend to Muhldenau .. }	Mr. WEBSTER.
<i>Ahab</i>	his Steward	Mr. GOUGH.
<i>Muhldenau</i>	{ the Minister of Mariendorpt.. }	Mr. KNOWLES.
<i>Rupert</i>	betrothed to Meeta..	Mr. WARRELL.
<i>Hans</i>	{ Servant to Muhl- denau. }	Mr. BUCKSTONE.
<i>Rodolph</i>	{ Soldiers }	Mr. GALLOT.
<i>Gerold</i>		Mr. HUTCHINGS.
<i>Lodowick</i>		Mr. GREEN.
<i>Courier</i>		Mr. CLARK.
<i>Servant.</i>		
<i>Adolpha</i>	Wife of Idenstein ..	Miss COOPER.
<i>Madame Roselheim</i> , .	Mother of Rupert ..	Mrs. DAWSON.
<i>Meeta</i>	{ Daughter to Muhldenau }	Miss ELPHINSTONE.
<i>Esther</i>	{ Housekeeper to Muhldenau.. }	Mrs. GLOVER.

Soldiers, Male and Female Servants, &c.

THE MAID OF MARIENDORPT.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Garden, low Garden Wall, and a House.*

Enter a Courier.

Cour. Hoa, there! You in the garden there!

Hans [*without*]. Anan!

Good day, Sir. A fine morning. Did you call?

O Esther! Esther!

Cour. Who lives here?

Hans. My master.

Cour. That know I, well as you do! Do you think I took you for the owner of the house?

Hans. I never said you did. O Esther!

Cour. Who

Lives here?

Hans. My master, as I said before.

Cour. You sluggish-witted knave! I want to know. Your master's name.

Hans. Couldn't you tell me so

At once? What need of going round about,

The gate before your nose? Why give you talk,

And call you names, when all the fault's your own?

How could I guess it was my master's name,

You wish'd to know—O Esther!

Cour. Who lives here?

Hans. The minister of Mariendorpt.

Cour. Is that

Thy master's name?

Hans. Why, 'tis all one. His name

Is Muhldenau, and he's the minister

Of Mariendorpt.

Cour. Is that the only door

To the house?

Hans. Go round, you'll find another door—

The proper one—O Esther!

Cour. This way?

Hans. Yes.

Cour. I'd like to have the quick'ning of thy wits!

Esther [*without*]. What does that coxcomb speaking there so high?

Hans. There's Esther coming! You had best be off!

Cour. Hang you and her together! [*Goes out.*]

Hans. That is kind.

I would not mind to hang along with her!
I'm sick for love! I'm sure I am! I have lost
My appetite! My stomach was my clock
That used to give me note of eating-time—
It never warns me now! A smoking dish
Was sure to set my heart a-beating once;
Now be it flesh, or fish, or fowl, or aught,
It moves me nothing. I would rather feast—
A thousand times I would—on Esther's face!
I'm mortal sick for love! I used to sleep;
Scarce touch'd my head my pillow, I was off,
And, let me lie, I took my measure on't
Six hours, at least, upon a stretch! but now
I toss and turn, lie straight, or doubled up,
Enfold mine arms, or throw them wide abroad,
Rhyme o'er my prayers, or count a hundred out,
And then begin again—yet not a wink
The richer for't, but rise as I lie down!
And 'tis true love that ails me!—very love!
Of womankind but one can work my cure!
'Tis not as one may fancy veal, and, yet,
Put up with mutton! If I get not her,
I starve and die! How I *do* love thee, Esther!
But thou regard'st it not, nor pay'st it heed;
Thou ratest me as nothing; but I'm something,
Or never had I fall'n in love with thee.
Nor durst I tell thee how I love thee, Esther!
O! my fair Esther! O! my goddess, Esther!—
My lily, pink, rose, tulip, everything
That's beautiful and sweet!—would thou wast by
To hear the love-names I am calling thee!

ESTHER enters, speaking angrily, holding some roots.

Esther. Ho, sirrah Hans? Is this your work?

Hans. Dear Esther!

Esther. I can bear anything, except
Your anger! labour without wages!—work
From morn till night—go without breakfast, dinner,
Or supper—suffer aught, yet be a man!
But when you rate me I am good for nothing!—
A joint that's pick'd to the bone—fish, three days stale—
Wine gone a month without the stopper—cheese
Scoop'd to the rind and kept in a hot pantry,
Or foot of capon only with the strings
Raked from the garbage where't has lain a week!

Don't scold me, then—in sooth you should not do't,
For never say I unkind word to thee,
But call thee, still, all sorts of loving names.

Esther. You've spoil'd my garden! hoe'd my tulips up
Instead of weeds—you have!—

Hans. Don't stamp at me,
It makes my heart jump—Ah!—'Twas kind of you
To stop! But knew she how I loved her foot;
She would not stamp it at me.

Esther. Why do you touch
My garden?

Hans. 'Tis to make it orderly;
Keep the earth smooth, and rake it small as crumbs;
Prop the tall flowers with standards; clear the beds
Of chick-weed, grass, and thievish dandelion,
That sucks up all the nourishment around it;
Trim the box edges straight, and of a piece;
And roll the gravel-walks till they are even
And smooth as any carpet.

Esther. Would your pains
Would spare themselves! The other day you broke
My finest rose.

Hans. It was with kissing it!
It was indeed your finest rose, and so
I call'd it Esther; and, in very truth,
Made love to it, and in my rapture broke it!
O Esther, if you knew—

Esther. Knew what?

Hans. Nay, nothing.

You take me up so snappishly! I am sure,
I bear you much good will—I say *good will*
Because I am afraid to tell you what
I bear you; and when you intreat me harshly,
I can't endure it, but it brings my heart
Into my throat, that I begin to choke,
And then I fall a-crying. Don't you see,
I'm crying now—and wiping of my eyes?

Esther. A fly has got into them.

Hans. Do you say
A fly? I would it were so small a thing!
I would it were a gnat, a wasp, a hornet—
Better be stung by anything, than Esther.
A fly indeed! I would it were a fly—
It was no fly! O Esther, if you knew!

Esther. Knew what? What dost thou mean?

Hans. Alack-a-day!

Esther. Go clean the knives and forks! [*Stamping at him.*]

Hans. They are made of steel,
And steel is hard, and, if it is, no wonder.
'Tis steel—and 'tis its nature! 'Tis not so
With human hearts, for they are flesh and blood,
Whereof was never made, nor *will* be made,

Nor *can* be made, a knife and fork; and yet
No steel at times is harder! 'Tis a pity.

Esther. Is all that silver clean'd?

Hans. How sweet a sound

Has silver! Yet 'tis heat-proof. Without fear
You dip it in a pot of boiling broth,

Which can not you the tongue, and yet how harsh
The tongue will sometimes sound!

Esther. [*Stamping.*] Have you your wits?

Hans. Yes!—No!—I only have a part of them.
I'll tell you where the other part is gone,
If you will let me.

Esther. Well, sir!

Hans. If you knew——

Esther. [*Stamping more violently.*] Begone, I'll never know!—

[*HANS goes out.*]—What does he mean?

The creature's not in love with me? Ne'er yet

Met I the man was bold enough to woo me,

And that among bold men—and would *he* try,

Whom nature, by mistaking, framed a man,

And gave a chicken's heart to? I should like

To see him woo me! Why, I have ta'en his part,

As might a mother, her girl-petted boy's,

A thousand times—saved him from kicks and beatings—

Fought for him, standing by and crowing, while

He saw me win his battle—"If I knew!"

I half suspect the thing's in love with me!

And, now I think on't, for this month or two

The boy is alter'd wondrously! He sighs,

And sighs!—and mumbles to himself, and goes

Moping about the house. Sure as I live,

The boy's in love, and I'm to have a husband!

I, to whom man durst never say soft thing

The second time! A husband! I shall die

At the thought. [*Laughs.*] Make Hans my husband [*Laughs*]—
then the end

O' th' world were come. [*Laughs.*] O dear! my sides will
crack

With laughter! Esther go to church with Hans!

Take oath to love, to honour, and obey him! [*Laughs.*]

Yes, with a curtesy! and then take him home

In my apron! Esther become wife to Hans! [*Laughs.*]

Hans husband unto Esther! [*Laughs.*] Husband! [*Laughs.*]
Husband! [*Laughs.*]

Enter MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Mad. Ros. Why, Esther, what's the matter?

Esther. [*Still laughing.*] I'm laughing!

Mad. Ros. I see you are. What makes you laugh?

Esther. [*Laughing.*] A thought

That came into my head.

Mad. Ros. Dismiss it then—

Behoves you to be busy with grave matters.
Your master leaves us. He is summon'd hence
By sudden requisition of high duty.

Esther. How soon?

Mad. Ros. At once. Prepare for his departure.

Esther. Goes Meeta with him?

Mad. Ros. No, nor any one.

A secret mission takes him, for the service
Of her, the royal dame, who was his mistress.

Esther. And how will Meeta bear it?

Mad. Ros. As she ought.

Meeta knows nothing paramount to duty.

Esther. And this to fall upon the very eve

Of her wedding. Will it stop it?

Mad. Ros. I don't know.

Esther. I hope it will not; I have fear of crosses
In all such matters.

Mad. Ros. Thinkest thou of weddings?

Esther. Madam!

Mad. Ros. Why, Esther, what's the matter with you?

Esther. Nothing!—That is—Unless I laugh I die!

[Goes out, laughing immoderately.]

Mad. Ros. What's come to her? 'Tis not her mood to
laugh—

At such a time, too! But I have not thought
To waste on her. A dangerous mission this—

A search, unauthorized, and that, with foes

On every side of him. The reverend man

For duty puts his life in jeopardy,

Nor pauses, but as soon as call'd obeys—

His daughter on the eve of marriage too,

As Esther said—her bridegroom daily look'd for,

My son, my Rupert—fit to mate a princess,

But yet more fitly with sweet Meeta match'd,

In virtue without peer! Will he postpone

Their nuptials? No, he will not, if I know him.

But whatsoever he resolves is wise;

For piety is still the good man's law.

[Goes out.]

SCENE II.—A Room in MUHLDENAU's House.

Enter MUHLDENAU.

Muhl. Meeta! I thought she was alone with me!

No wonder if the news transfixes her

With deep abstraction, newly told; when I,

Already in possession on't, alike

Forget myself! Why, Meeta! Come, my child,

Meeta. *[Entering.]* And must you go?

Muhl. The voice that calls me hence

I never disobey'd—durst disobey!

Thou art here in safety. This, thy father's will,
 From want assures thee—leaves thee heir, indeed,
 To modest competence. Thy nuptials too,
 Which, for this chance I would not have postponed,
 Give thee a father in a husband. Thus,
 Absolved from care on thy account, I go.
 For thou art good, my child, and hast beside
 A Father whom thou lovest to obey,
 With power no less than will to guard his child,
 That trusts in him—in every place at hand,
 At every hour—the Father of thy father!
 In whose strong hands, and pitiful as strong,
 I leave thee, saying, "Let his will be done!"

Meeta. Will you be long away?

Muhl. Not long, I hope;

Not *very* long. What call you long, my child?

A year?

Meeta. O, not a year!

Muhl. No!—No! No fear

Of that.—No; certainly I shall not be

A year away.

Meeta. Nor half a year?

Muhl. Nor half

A year.

Meeta. Half that?

Muhl. I know not, but should think

A lapse, more brief, should bring me home, again.

Meeta. Perhaps a month?

Muhl. Perhaps; but graver things

Lie in the hands of seconds. Yea; a second

Might balk departure, yet remove me from thee;

Never again to meet thee—in this world—

In this world, *Meeta!*—so, think less of absence;

That, *here*, hath termination.

Meeta. Is the mission

That takes you, dangerous?

Muhl. I'll not deceive you.

It is.

Meeta. Sweet Heaven have mercy!

Muhl. It is well

To call for that—but better 'tis to know

That what Heaven wills is right!—Believe in that,

Thou'lt find it, in the end, to thy account.

But what is danger? Is't always the thing

We call so? Sin is danger, certainly;

Putting in jeopardy man's proper life—

The life to come!—but what is danger else?

'Tis hard to say! Of this, howe'er, be sure,

More oft it wears a smooth face, than a rough;

So, for the most part, found, when least expected,

And fatalest! The storms that are foretold

Are easiest met—the reefs, avoided,

That raise the ripple ! He was feasting, Meeta,
 Who saw the writing, to the prophet's mind
 Explain'd alone, though manifest to all ;
 And while the impious revel yet held on,
 The flood was turn'd aside, to let the surge
 Of battle in ; and ruin overthrew
 Him and his kingdom ! Hear me, Meeta ; glad
 This summons makes me, though it threatens danger ;
 And, for I know that it will hearten thee
 To bear my absence, I will tell thee why.
 Sit down, my child. Thou hadst a sister, Meeta.

Meeta. A sister !

Muhl. I have kept the knowledge from thee,
 To save the questioning had follow'd it,
 And could not be replied to, without cost
 Of suffering, while recollection of
 Bereavement yet was young.

Meeta. I had a sister ?

Muhl. You had a sister.

Meeta. Had ?

Muhl. Had, Meeta.

Meeta. Had !

Alas ! was I so rich, and knew it not ?
 I had a sister ! O what light and warmth
 Of love, I never knew before, the thought
 Hath shot into my soul !—And now—And now,
 All's strangely dark and cold ! How is it, father,
 I had a sister, and remember not ?

Muhl. Because 'twas in thy childhood, Meeta, when
 The memory, too tender, yields impressions
 Their causes ta'en away.—And yet there was
 A time, when thou remember'dst such a thing !

Meeta. Was there ? O heartless Meeta ! Once remember
 She had a sister, and forget it ever !

Muhl. Thou hast forgot the siege of Magdeburgh.

Meeta. No ! I remember that ! I never hear
 The thunder, but I think of that !—or see
 The lightning set the sky on fire, but that
 Comes back to me !—No !—no !—I recollect
 The siege of Magdeburgh !

Muhl. How long did it last ?

Meeta. One night.

Muhl. Three months !

Meeta. I only recollect

One night—and it was in the street, and men
 With horrid looks and yells ran to and fro !
 On horseback some, and some on foot—some firing,
 And some with weapons which they whirl'd and darted
 As they moved on !

Muhl. Ay ! Mercy show'd they not,
 That night, to man or woman !

Meeta. Woman ? No !

I saw them seize one by the hair!—I am sure I did!

Muhl. You did—you told me so yourself.

Meeta. I told you so myself?

Muhl. You have forgot!

And can you wonder? You were barely then

Turn'd five years old. Were you not near that woman?

Meeta. Yes! close to her! I had a hold of her.

Muhl. That too you told me. Do you not remember?

Meeta. No.

Muhl. No!—Not when I found thee in the street

Wandering alone, and, 'twixt thy sobbings, on

Thy father calling?

Meeta. No.

Muhl. Thou told'st it me

The following day, and often afterwards.

I let the fruitless inquisition drop.

So memory fell asleep! Remember'st aught

That woman carried?

Meeta. Carried?

Muhl. Carried.

Meeta. No.

Muhl. She was thy sister's nurse—

Meeta. It was a child

She carried! Was it? Yes—I see it now!

In her arms, as plain as I see you. O heart!

What hast thou been about? All's clear as noon!

A child she carried, and it was my sister!

I recollect my sister! Were they kill'd?

Muhl. The woman was.

Meeta. And not my sister?

Muhl. That

Knows Heaven alone! That night of carnage over,

We search'd the street—the woman's body found,

But, of thy little sister, not a trace!

Meeta. And yet you search'd the street?—She was not kill'd!

Had she been kill'd, her body had been found

Sure as the nurse's—Yes!—and I have heard

Nine times in ten, when caught in mortal strait,

A woman with an infant in her arms,

Although she lose herself, will save her load!

She was not kill'd, for didn't I escape?

I, quite alone, and clamouring as you say!

They hurt not me whom else soe'er they hurt;

And would they harm a little speechless child,

As like to smile at them as look afraid;

To come to them, if it could walk, as flee?

'Tis not in mortal man that has his wits,

To slay a little harmless, witless child!

To wound it, scratch it!—I would stake my life

She was not kill'd—Some good man snatch'd her up—

Took her away—put in a place of safety—
 Heaven bless him!—cherishes her now perhaps
 As if she were his own! Do you not think
 She is alive?—I'm *sure* she is alive;
 I have a sister still!

Muhl. Thy sanguine heart
 A little light enlarges into day.
 It is thy father's nature which thou hast,
 Uncheck'd in thee, in him subdued by time.
 Now see'st thou why this summons is a thing
 To welcome? Hitherto my debt to thee,
 My yearnings for my lost one still has held
 In check—yes, yearnings, Meeta; for I own
 The likeness, though a faint one, of thy hope,
 Touching thy sister, round thy father's heart
 Hath ever hung! but now that I am call'd—
 Commanded—for 'tis even so, my child—
 To leave thee—though the track I must pursue
 Borders with danger, yet it is a journey
 I undertake more pleased, than grudgingly;
 For—if we may believe in presages—
 And wherefore not, if we believe at all—
 As who shall shape and bound the ways of Heaven—
 To other issue than its proper one,
 And nearer to myself, this mission leads—
 Perhaps concerning thee!—perhaps—Yes, Meeta,
 I cannot help the thought, for, next to thee,
 It is the stay of my old age—perhaps
 Concerning—

Meeta. My lost sister.

Muhl. Yes, my child,
 Not dead, but lost as thou believ'st. How well
 You reason'd on't! The body was not found:
 A nurse, as now thou saidst, will lose herself,
 Yet save her load—'tis not, I do believe,
 In flesh and blood to slay a little child!
 You're right, the child was saved—is living yet!
 You have made your father turn a boy again!
 Well, be it so! I *do* believe it, Meeta!
 You are content, my child, to let me go?

Meeta. I am, sir—that is, not, as at the first,
 My heart grows sick at thought of losing you.
 Couldn't I go too?—No!—No!—There is danger,
 And that's my answer. Farewell, father!—There!

We'll say good-bye at once!

Muhl. Not yet, my child!

Shouldst thou require a friend, while I'm away,
 Here is the name of one. He lives in Prague;
 He is a Jew.

Meeta. A Jew?

Muhl. He'll give thee counsel,
 Shouldst thou have need of it.

Meeta. A Jew.

Muhl. Or, if

Thy funds run low, in sudden exigence,
He'll help them mount again.

Meeta. A Jew?

Muhl. Why not?

Meeta. And I a Christian father's child!

Muhl. Is not

A Jew a man? Wouldst thou, a Christian, help

A Jew, that's of thy creed an enemy?

Meeta. I would!

Muhl. And why not then a Jew help thee?

I know a reason; but the blame on't lies

Not on the other side. It is the race

Elect from all mankind, whose course is mark'd

From far-off time by high behests from Heaven,

By miracles and oracles, and deeds

Of mighty men who put their trust therein!

Don't fear thy father's friend!—Don't fear the Jew!

Meeta. I am corrected, sir.—I shall observe.

Muhl. Here comes thy Rupert's mother—and in time.

Enter MADAME ROSELHEIM.

My absence, madam, need not be a let

To stay my daughter's nuptials with thy son.

I know a soldier's time is not his own;

And what is granted him, behoves him use.

So, Meeta, do not wait for my return,

If past the time, delay'd—Farewell, my child!

Madam, farewell!—We are in the hands of Heaven!

[*Goes out; and MEETA, after a struggle, falls weeping
upon the neck of MADAME ROSELHEIM.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—MUHLDENAU's Garden.

*Wreaths of flowers hung from the branches of the trees—rustic
seats here and there, crnamented.*

Enter ESTHER and HANS.

Hans. Now, Esther, have I pleased you? Is there aught

I have forgotten? Are the garlands right?

The seats in order, and the company,

Bid as you told me? There's the music too,

Three fiddles—first and second, and a bass,

A hautboy, flute, and harp! Are you not pleased?

Look pleased! Do, Esther! Seldom do you smile
On me; and welcomer than Christmas day,
Or New-Year's day, or any day o' the year,
Were one kind look from Esther.

Esther. To say truth,

You have managed finely!

Hans. La! how sweet you smile!

What's honey now? I wouldn't take a hive
To pay for't with that smile. Indeed, I wouldn't,
In very deed, I wouldn't—and I'm fond
Of honey! furious fond of it. O dear!
A thing so sweet to see, what must it be
To taste? O happy days of boyhood, when
Whatever I did right was sure to get me
A kiss from my mother. Times are changed with Hans;
Do what he may, he gets no kisses now.

Esther. The boy wants me to kiss him!—So!—Good Hans,
'Tis not with men, you know, as 'tis with boys:

Kisses may come to boys, but men must fetch them.

Hans. But knew I, I could get them—I would fetch them!

Esther. Why, Hans, how can you know unless you try?

Hans. Unless I try!—Now mean you what you say?

Esther. Why say it else?

Hans. And they'll be had by fetching?

Esther. A fool may tell they'll not be had without.

Hans. O Esther!

Esther. Well!

Hans. Would I could hear thee say,

“O Hans!”

Esther. O Hans! There, I've said it!—Well?

Hans. Durst I but try? But then there is the fear!

Esther. And there's the hope! the flower beside the weed.

Hans. O Esther!—Oh.

Esther. O Hans!

Hans. Give me a kiss!

Esther. Fool!—said I not before,

Men must fetch kisses, though to boys they come?

Hans. O would you fancy me a boy!

Esther. I do;

Not only fancy thee, but know thee one!

Hans. Then treat me as a boy.

Esther. How?

Hans. As you said

Just now that boys were treated

Esther. As I live,

He'd have it come from me! What said I now?

Hans. You said that kisses come to boys.

Esther. I did;

And so do railings, cuffs, and fifty things

That are not half so sweet!—Did I not say

The dance was to be practised? Where are, then,

The partners? Where's the music? In a minut'

The bridegroom comes, when all should be prepared,
Is that the time for making ready? Stand'st
With gaping mouth when busy hands are needed—
Fetch here the dancers and the music.

Hans. [*Without moving.*] Yes.

Esther. Is that the way to do it? Will they come
With only saying "Yes?" Art thou a post?

Hans. In sooth I know not what I am! I know
I'm not myself! I may be man or woman,
A fish or a brute beast, a stone, or log
Of wood, for what I care! I would 'twere now
All over with me, and the undertaker
Were working for me! It will come to that!
I'll do thy bidding—then I'll go and die—
I will! I'll tie a true true-lover's knot,
You'll see I will—Good-bye!—

Esther. [*Stamping.*] Hans!

Hans. Well?

Esther. Have here
The dancers, ere I stamp my foot again.

Hans. I fly. [*Goes out.*]

Esther. Poor Hans! The boy is deep in love!
How have I managed to light up this flame?

"Heigho-ho!" "O dear!" The simpleton, I vow,
Grows interesting! I should grieve for Hans,
Were aught to happen to him. It is hard
To be the bane of a poor fellow's peace,
Much more to be the death of him! Should he go
And drown himself! or hang himself, indeed!

Hans! [*Calling*] I could never bear myself again!
To see him laid out in his shroud! Hans! Hans! [*Calling*]
To follow the poor fellow to his grave—
To see him lower'd into't.—Why, Hans! [*Calling*] I hear
The earth upon his coffin! Hans, I say!
Where are you?

Hans. [*Entering with dancers.*] Here! Is anything the matter,
You call'd me in a tone of such distress?

Esther. [*Recovering herself.*] Am I not in a hurry, and you
take

An hour and more to do a minute's work!

Hans. I'm sure I'm hardly gone a minute.

Esther. Fool!

You cannot tell a minute from an hour!

Hans. Here are the dancers and the music, but
One partner is a-wanting.

Esther. You stand up!

Hans. It is a woman's wanting.

Esther. 'Tis no matter,
Take you her place.

Hans. I'll do whate'er you bid me,
But 'tis too bad to make a woman of me.

Esther [*impatiently*]. Are you ready?

Hans. Yes! I'll dance him till I tire him.

[*Dance.* HANS exerts himself to the utmost, constantly looking towards ESTHER, who gradually becomes pleased, and still more and more enjoys his vivacity. His partner gives up, and HANS dances by himself before ESTHER, who humours his steps. The others at length dance off.

Hans. Danced I to please you?

Esther. Yes: and there your thanks.

[*Kisses him.*

Hans. And there are yours for paying me so well!

[*Kissing again.*

Mars! if I haven't kiss'd her!

Esther. Hans! Why, Hans!

Hans. Nay, don't be angry! All the blame was yours;

You kiss'd me first. 'Twas only kiss for kiss!

Esther. Here's some one coming! Why you idle boy!

Nothing within, without the house, to do,

That you keep standing here? No plate to clean?

No knives and forks? no furniture to polish?

No glasses nor decanters to be rinsed,

And dried and clear'd? When put you last to rights

Your pantry? 'Twas in wondrous order when

I look'd into it yesterday! Go, sir!

A gaping mouth won't serve for busy hands!

To work, I say! Do you hear me, boy?

Hans. I do,

Yet hardly can believe it.

Esther. Hence. To work!

[HANS goes out.

Mad. Ros. [*Entering.*] To work? Why, Esther 'tis a holiday! Knew you what you were saying? Do you hear me?

Esther turn'd girl! May I believe my eyes—

And they have never fail'd me yet—I saw thee

Kiss the lad Hans just now?

Esther. 'Twas he kiss'd me.

Mad. Ros. You first kiss'd him.

Esther. Well, if I did, I did.

He danced just now, and pleased me, 'twas so well—

And so I kiss'd him, as a woman may

A boy!

Mad. Ros. You are right; you might have said a child:

Hans is no more.

Esther. Hans no more than a child?

He's twenty-five!—He says so, next birthday.

A pretty child indeed! If he's a child,

Children are marriageable! Such a child

My mother's husband was, when birth of me

Made him a father.

Mad. Ros. Be not angry, Esther;

I did not say of Hans he was too young

To be a husband—if you fancy him.

Esther. I fancy Hans? I fancy living man,

And Hans especially! I, that am gall

At very thought a man should be my master!
 I, to whom never ventured man to say
 Soft thing a second time—and those have tried
 Who have back'd furious seas, and shown a front
 To bayonet-points and loaded cannon-mouths—
 And I to fancy Hans! I thank you, ma'am.
 Dress up a girl in boy's clothes for me, do,
 And send her me for husband! Hans indeed
 To call me wife! I to call Hans my husband!
 How I should like to hear myself! I'll marry
 When it rains husbands!—but it shan't be Hans!

Mad. Ros. Well, Esther, do not fret.

Esther. I fret? I think

I see myself! Fret about Hans! I know
 You only jested. 'Twas a rare conceit
 To say I'd marry Hans. [*Laughs.*] I'll kill myself
 With laughing at the thought. Esther to marry—
 And Hans, of all mankind!

Mad. Ros. You are right. 'Twas jest!
 I have always set you down for an old maid.
 Go see if Meeta's ready.

Esther. [*Aside.*] An old maid!
 Thank Heaven, I'm only five-and-thirty yet.
 Old maid indeed, and only thirty-five!
 I yet may live to be a grandmother! [*Goes out.*]

Mad. Ros. No sign of Rupert yet, and noon is past.
 He will not come. These nuptials will be stopp'd.
 Her father's summons boded, as I thought,
 No good. There is in the affairs of life,
 As in the atmosphere, a season, where
 To shining day succeedeth shining day;
 But once the weather breaks, 'tis cloud and cloud,
 And long-deferr'd and slow, the clearing up!

Enter Messenger with letters, and retires.

From Rupert! I was right—he will not come:
 The field is ta'en a month before the time.
 His leave has been recall'd! Poor Meeta! Go
 Undress thee, girl! Thy gear of every day
 Belongs to this, on which thou thought'st to wear
 The brightest suit that virginhood puts on!
 This is to Meeta—from her father? No—
 The hand is strange! Why, who should write to her
 Except her father? About whom but him,
 Or Rupert should she hear, and he has told
 His errand in my letter! If it speaks
 About her father, harm has fall'n upon him!
 And how will Meeta bear it? Firm of mind—
 Yet with a heart, so quickly tender, how
 Support the news of evil fall'n on him!
 What can have chanced? Perhaps imprisonment.

Not death? O no! not death! It cannot be!
Heaven, for his child's sake—for his own—will spare him.

[Goes out.]

SCENE II.—MEETA'S Dressing-room.

MEETA and ESTHER enter—the former abstracted, the latter making a bridal knot.

Esther. No favour for your breast! A bride, and go
To church without a favour! Well! to think,
Of all things, *that* should be forgot! Almost
As well forget your wedding-day itself!
Almost as well no wedding as no favour!
Know'st thou not so? [Touching her.]

Meeta. What said you to me, Esther?

Esther. There! I protest, as well it were the wall
I spoke to as to you! as much 'twould hear me!
What said you to me, Esther? Esther said—
It was your wedding-day—that you forgot
A favour for your breast—that she would make one—
And here 'tis ready! Let me pin it on.

Meeta. No word yet from my father!

Esther. From your father?
Your lover, don't you mean?

Meeta. I mean my father!

Esther. Humph! Give me anything but want of nature!
I do not like you, Meeta! Flesh and blood
Are flesh and blood! Were it *my* wedding-day,
Almost the very hour, and every minute
The bridegroom look'd for, would my thought be running
Upon my father? To be honest, Meeta,
I'd think of something dearer—that I would,
And be a good child still!

Meeta. You lost your father
When you were but an infant. You don't know
What 'tis to love a father.

Esther. Do I not?
Yes; but I do! It is to honour him,
So we are bidden—that is, to obey him—
Respectfully entreat him!

Meeta. Nothing more?

Esther. What more?

Meeta. O, much!—O, very much!—Such things
We do to those that are indifferent to us,
Compared to a father! There is something more—
Better—less earthly—more o' th' grain of Heaven—
A love that's indefinable!—that holds
Ourselves as nothing, in respect of cherishing!
That's ever kneeling though no limb be bent,
And looking up with ever-watching will,
Anticipating wishes!—It is worship—

Although no lip be moved, no eye be strain'd,
 No hands be clasp'd—next that which hath acceptance
 Above—O' the soul! O, how I love my father!
 To say "before my life" is to say nothing—
 That's his, and 'tis a gasp and over! but
 To slave, beg, starve for him—forego possession
 Of mine own dearest earthly wishes—havings—
 I'd do it, Esther, in a moment!—Yes!
 Not give't a second thought! Remember'st thou
 I once was froward with thee? I was then
 A girl not ten years old—dost not remember?
 I had found a hair of his—a long white hair,
 And I had coil'd it up to treasure it;
 But thou didst flout me for't and take't away,
 And cast into the fire—whence all your might
 It took to hold me. Yes, I would have thrust
 My hand into the fire to save that hair!
 That is to love a father!

Esther. If it is,
 Then know I not what 'tis to love a father!
Meeta. You never knew one, said I not before?
 But mine was twice a parent—that is, Esther,
 He was my father and my mother too.
 I never knew my mother, but I am sure
 I should have loved her—dearly loved her, Esther;
 But my father—nurse was he to me, instructor,
 Playmate, companion, father—all, together!
 Think of that, Esther. Playmate! Such a man
 To bend into a child for my sake! There
 I half believe I find the root of love
 Which has struck deepest.—He to play the child
 With his white hairs!—There is not one of them
 But has a heart and soul in't—to me, Esther!—
 Don't smile—You know you own you cannot tell
 What 'tis to love a father.

Enter MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Mad. Ros. Meeta!

Meeta. Well,

Dear Madame Roselheim?

Mad. Ros. The post is in.

Meeta. And Rupert doesn't come?—I thought 'twould
 be so!

I was prepared for it! I wish'd it—though

My father will'd our nuptials should go on.

'Tis well! O, if there be one hour, which more

Than any other craves a parent's presence,

'Tis that which gives his child away from him!

She should go with his blessing, warm upon her, breathed

With an attesting kiss; then may she go

With perfect hope, and cheerly take with her

The benisons of all kind wishers else!—
You know I love your son?

Mad. Ros. [*Weeps.*] I know it, well,
My Meeta.

Meeta. Madam!—Mother! I'm the bride—
You must not weep till I do!—'Tis not fair;
I'll not be beat in disappointment, I
'That have chief cause to feel it! Is he ill?

Mad. Ros. No!—No!

Meeta. Thank Heaven! and yet some other cause
As grave as that of health, perhaps, prevents him?

Mad. Ros. No; the campaign has open'd—nothing more.

Meeta. Enough!—Long marches—nightly guards—chill
sleeping

In the open fields—foragings—reconnoiterings—
Skirmishings—stormings and pitch'd battles! Rupert,
Poor Rupert! [*Weeps.*]—Mother, I am quits with you,
There are my tears 'gainst yours!

Mad. Ros. I wasn't weeping
For Rupert, Meeta.

Meeta. For whom, then?—My father?

Mad. Ros. For no one—that is, there's no cause I know of
Why I should weep.

Meeta. Why weep then?

Mad. Ros. 'Twas a fear
I had—

Meeta. About my father?—Is that letter
For me? The one unopen'd?—Give it me! don't fear.
Though I'm a girl, I have a resolution. [*Reads letter.*
Read it! [*Handing it to* MADAME ROSELHEIM.

Mad. Ros. Arrested! and a prisoner
In Prague!—His fate uncertain—but his life
In peril, Meeta! [*Tottering as on the point of fainting.*

Meeta. [*Trying to recover her.*] Mother!—Madam!—
Madam!—

Mother!—Madame Roselheim, don't give way!—these things
Are catching, and I want to be myself!
I must be myself—I will be myself!—I'll not waver,
Flinch, droop, the matter of a moment.—Madam!
I have need of all the nerve I have—and help me!
Don't take it from me!—My father wants it all,
And he must have it, and shall!—Well, well! give way!
The more you are water, the more will I be rock!
I am so!—Let me see—

Mad. Ros. My child!—my Meeta!
Thou show'st it not; but, if I feel the shock,
What must it prove to thee!

Meeta. Nothing, madam!—nothing!
Let's see—How many miles is Prague from this?
I recollect—that's right!—that's right!—I have
My senses all about me—I thank Heaven!
The paper that he gave me?—It is here—

In my bosom!—I remember everything!

I am quite myself!

Mad. Ros. Meeta! this calmness frights me!

Meeta. Don't mind it!—All is well!—I recollect,

To every syllable, all my father told me!

And I will do his bidding.—A fine time

'Twould be for me to swoon! [*Laughs*]—a proper time! [*Laughs*].

I must not laugh; for if I do, I'm lost!

Heaven give me firmness!—Of myself, I'm nothing!

There!—'tis gone off. I'll but provide myself,

And away!

[*Going towards her chamber.*]

Mad. Ros. Where go you, Meeta?

Meeta. To my chamber, madam!

Mad. Ros. What go you there to do?

Meeta. To change my dress.

Mad. Ros. But, Meeta!—

Meeta. Mother, let me have my way!—

Don't hinder me, and do not follow me!

Else, that may come you would not wish to happen!

Command me, after, all my life, so now

You suffer me be mistress of myself!

[*Goes out.*]

Mad. Ros. She makes me tremble—she's so little moved!

Why, Esther! are you too about to swoon?

Esther. Almost I am!—My heart turn'd sick just now;

But it grows better.

Mad. Ros. What do you think of Meeta?

Esther. I wonder at her—but she's all a wonder!

Had you but heard her talk, ere you came in,

About her father!—

Mad. Ros. I'm afraid of her.

She is too calm—it is unnatural!—

She cannot be herself, thus to sustain

What taxes you and me, too much, to whom

It comes not half so home!—She has not shed

A tear!—No sound of suffering—a moan,—

A sigh—a breath, you could mistake for one—

Has 'scaped her! She forbade me follow her;

But am I right to heed her? Reason is gone,

Ere you suspect that it has given way;

So this collectedness may be but crust,

Not substance; which, while you believe't to be,

Straight crumbles into dust! We should not leave her

Alone.

Esther. I heed her not!—I'll follow her!

[*Going.*]

Meeta. [*Entering.*] Where are you going, Esther?

Esther. Into your chamber,

To look for you.

Meeta. Well!—here I am!—What want you?

Esther. Why, you are dress'd as 'twere to go a journey!

Meeta. I am.

Mad. Ros. And whither go you, Meeta?

Meeta. To

My father!

Mad. Ros. Are you mad?

Meeta. I could be mad!

But I must keep my reason—and I will!

Mad. Ros. Reflect you on the distance?

Meeta. 'Tis a stride!

Mad. Ros. A stride! And do you calculate
The danger?

Meeta. There's no danger—none, but that
In which he lies!

Mad. Ros. You may be stopp'd by robbers!

Meeta. There are no robbers.

Mad. Ros. Recollect the war!

Meeta. There is no war.

Mad. Ros. Know'st thou what thou art saying?

Meeta. I do,—Believe it! 'Tis the shortest way.
Thou'lt have to take't at last!

Esther. She shall not stir.

Meeta. Nay, but I will!—and go!

Mad. Ros. Don't let her, Esther;
Lay hold upon her.

Esther. Will I not!

Meeta. You will not!—

You must not!—dare not! If you do, his blood
Lie at your door!

Mad. Ros. Alas! what power have you
To help him, child?

Meeta. My will!—Where there's the will,
You cannot tell but there may be the power!
Strong will can make a little power go far—
At least, can I not beg his enemies
To spare his life?

Mad. Ros. You'll find their hearts are stone.

Meeta. Perhaps; but I shall try to prove them flesh.

Mad. Ros. And if thou prove they are not?

Meeta. Then, I'll deal

With his prison bolts and bars. Mother, 'tis vain!

Prevent me now, and I will 'scape again;

If not to-day, to-morrow. If not then,

The next day—or the following. So time

That's precious—everything—is lost, and, then,

The mischief done, and no good come of it

That might have come, were time used promptly! Madam—

Mother,—'tis reason, plain to speculation,

As the hand I lift before you now to Heaven

To register my vow, that no regard

Of difficulty, or unlikelihood,

Or danger, or persuasion, or enforcement,

Shall hold me back one moment from the attempt

To save my father's life. Heaven bless you, madam!

Esther, good-bye! That's right—No weeping—Nothing

But a kiss, and part!—Good-bye!—Good-bye!—Good-bye!

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Room in JOSEPH's House at Prague.**Enter JOSEPH and AHAB.**Ahab.* More gold!

Jos. Yes, Ahab, more! The dross is mine,
 Thou only hast the custody, and yet
 Thou yield'st it me, as it were drops of blood
 From thine own heart! I say I want more gold,
 And more to follow, yet, if that suffice not;
 And failing gold, I'll coin my parchments, plate,
 Jewels, and furniture—my very roof—
 But I shall find supplies!

Ahab. And for a Christian?

Jos. Thou art my brother-Jew. What couldst thou more
 Than risk thy life for mine?

Ahab. I do not know

What greater venture man can risk for man,
 Than his own life.

Jos. Wouldst thou risk thine for me?

Thou art honest, Ahab, though thou lov'st thyself
 Better than any living thing beside.
 Thou pausest to consider! Do not pause,
 'Tis waste of time, which I will save thee. Ahab,
 Thou wouldst not risk thy life for me. Now mark,—
 When I suffer'd persecution, Ahab,
 Ten years ago, in Spain,—where Christian men
 In their Master's name, did that which never yet
 Their Master's precepts warranted—I say it,
 For it is written, Ahab, written plain,
 That he who runs may read—when Christian men
 Gave human, living flesh to roast, because
We held the old faith and eschew'd the new,—
 The Christian father of this Christian child
 Then saved my life at peril of his own!—
 Get the gold, Ahab! He did that for me,
 That was not of his creed, thou wouldst not do,
 Who holdest it! Ahab, I, then, believed
 The Master taught them right! He is my neighbour
 That does a neighbour's office unto me!
 The gold, and plenty on't—a hundred ducats!

Ahab. A hundred ducats?*Jos.* 'Tis the twentieth part

Of what remains! A *portion* of his life
 He did not risk, but *all*. Resolve at once
 To do my bidding, else my mind may change,
 And I may bid thee fetch the whole,—the whole!
 A prompt compliance, in a strait, is best.

Where others have the power to make conditions !
 Resistance tires forbearance ! Fetch the gold,
 For the sake of him who saved the hands that made it
 From the fire.—Look here ! they are not cinders, Ahab,
 But flesh ; and thank a Christian. Fetch the gold !

[AHAB goes out.]

Poor girl ! how she has wasted since she first
 Came here : yet how her spirit lasts, beyond
 Her body : there she suffers no impairment !
 My Rachel had been like her, had she lived,—
 The face reminds me of her, as it shines
 From the thick bower of her raven hair,
 When, now and then, by chance, I see it down !

Enter MEETA.

What news, my girl ?

Meeta. None !—I have sped to-day
 As yesterday ! The names of “father,”—“child,”
 Seem here to carry, to men’s hearts, no import
 Past that of lightest words. They hardly win
 An audience for me ! When they do, the eye
 Of the listener, every other moment caught
 By passing trivialst things, admonishes
 My tongue it only wastes an earnest suit
 Upon a heedless ear. Once, as I thought,
 My auditor was moved,—almost he seem’d
 To give me hope,—I felt as if about
 To cross the threshold of the prison, and
 Blessings and thanks rose in my throat so thick,
 That utterance quite fail’d me, and, except
 For tears, that sudden came to my relief,
 I had fallen at his feet,—yet at that very moment
 Some antic, feat I saw not, but a wretch
 Practised within his view, convulsed him straight
 With laughter, ’mid the peals of which he left me,
 As I had ne’er been standing there ! A clap
 Of thunder had not stunn’d me half so much.

Jos. Was’t a new warden ?

Meeta. Yes.

Jos. Corrupt his heart,
 With pity at the door to thrust it back,
 And let the mood, it shrinks from, enter in !

Meeta. They are all alike ! See. [Showing an empty purse]

Jos. Thou hast emptied it ?

Well, I can fill it again !

Meeta. All gone, and naught
 To show for it : a heart-full, too, of prayers !

Jos. I fear there is no hope !

Meeta. Don’t say it ! Though
 For so far we have found men’s hearts but stones,
 Still will we turn them up. It cannot be
 But we shall light on one that’s flesh and blood.

I won't believe it! Yea, though from my hand
The hundred thousandth one dropp'd dead as flint,
I'd go to the next as though the human touch
Might meet me there! No! while my father lives,
I'll ne'er give up the hope to save his life!

Jos. A girl—and proof against despondence thus!

Meeta. I often fear you deem me hard of heart.
Perhaps you think I do not weep enough?
It is not that I could not weep—it is
That I *won't* weep—that I won't give way—that I'll keep
My spirit up—my thoughts about me—waste
Naught that my father wants! I can't afford
To be a child and melt. No! I must be
A deliverer, and, to dissolvment, proof
As a rock. I have not shed a single tear
But as a prayer—except to-day, when I gasp'd,
And must have wept or dropp'd, and even then
It came of itself! Thou saidst just now thou fear'dst
There was no hope? But there is! I came resolved
To keep it from thee, promise had so oft
Enticed belief to balk it. I have a chance
To see the daughter of the Governor.

Jos. How came this blessed chance?

Meeta. Ha! blessed, say'st thou?—
Perhaps 'twill prove so!—The poor human heart,
How it doth build, and build on slightest grounds!
Words dropp'd by chance 'twill take for prophecies!
We'll pray it may be bless'd—We, then, may hope for't!
Well, I *will* tell you.

Jos. Hope begins to dawn!

Meeta. Didn't I say there was no fear of hope?
I went, as every day I yet have done,
To the Governor's. The man that oped the gate
Was a new warder. A new face, new hope!
I told my tale; and, when 'twas done, implored him
Prefer my poor petition to his lady,
To grant me briefest audience.

Jos. To the daughter
Of the Governor?

Meeta. To her!

Jos. I see: go on!

Meeta. Like all the rest, he show'd—not plainly though,
But by a hint—that charities were things
Of cost, and must be bought with more than thanks.
My purse was officeless, my last balk'd suit
Had of its trust absolved it quite—a wretch
Who bragg'd, to win my bribe, a power he had not,
And added savage mockery to the wrong!
I pleaded destitution. "What," he cried,
"No toy, no trinket, you could turn to coin!"
And rudely snatching from its place my hood,
Which I had just unloosed, for want of air—

"Ha!" he exclaim'd, "what costly treasure's this!"
As, by the action from its hand released,
My hair fell all around me!

Jos. Thereof make they
High traffic. I have known a head of hair,
Of ordinary goodliness, to bring
A common peasant maid a little dower!
There scarce were price a woman might not set
On one so rich as thine.

Meeta. Indeed! I would
I then had known its value—I had made
A surer bargain.

Jos. Durst he ask it of thee?
Wretch! He shall never have it! Thou shalt take
A purse of ducats to him.

Meeta. It is his
Already. With my leave he sever'd it,
As only 'twere the string that held it up,
And, glad, I gave it to him.

Jos. I, at hand,
To fill thy purse! A quarter of an hour
Had ta'en thee here and back.

Meeta. And in that time
His mind had changed, or he had been removed,
And in his place another put, and all
Had been to do again, and that, perhaps
With lessen'd chance.—Had he ask'd me for a limb,
He had had it—had it!—not one precious moment
Had I stay'd haggling with him. It had gone
As the hair of my head—ay—as a single hair.
'Tis time I go—

Enter Ahab.

Ahab. Despatches have arrived.

Meeta. They bring the order for my father's death.
I see it! Say it. You cannot tell me worse
Than I know.

Ahab. The news is bad.

Meeta. I'll not give up
While there is chance the substance of a thread—
A film! Although a thousand emperors
Had sworn to take the life of his grey hairs,
While it is in them, I will try and save it!

Jos. Thou lookest faint! Some wine will hearten thee.

Meeta. I'll have no wine but such as I draw hence,
From my heart! There's not such wine in all thy house
To strengthen me! There's plenty, and to spare!

What time is he to die?

Jos. Tell her. No use
Withhold it from her. Her spirit is the arch
Which gaineth strength by that which burdens it.

Ahab. He is to die within three days, although

The Governor his case reported so,
It might have gain'd for him a milder doom.

Meeta. Did he? Did the Governor? Did you say
The Governor his case reported kindly?

The Governor? he?—he that's here?—here now
In Prague?—the very Governor of Prague?

Ahab. The same; but some severe reverse, 'tis said,
Our arms have met with, so have overcast
The imperial mind, that clemency is quench'd,
And thus thy father's death, alas, decreed!

Meeta. I would be here, and twenty leagues from this.

Jos. Why twenty leagues from this?

Meeta. That distance lives
A friend might give me help.

Jos. Then suffer me

To be thy second self, and see that friend.

Meeta. He is an enemy to Prague.

Jos. And Prague

An enemy to thee—and I'm thy friend!

Trust me, my child.

Meeta. My father told me this,
O thou good man—Thou Christian!—Pardon me.

Jos. Pardon thee, child? I thank and honour thee:
Thou canst not praise me more than call me that
Thy heart esteemeth best.

Meeta. Then come with me,
And I'll instruct thee on the way. 'Tis time
I see the servant of the Governor.

Three days we have from this—That's three whole days—
He dies on Saturday—[*Ruminating*]
—He shall not die!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*An Apartment in the Governor's.*

Enter BARON IDENSTEIN *and* ADOLPHA.

Iden. Indeed, indeed, it was not wisely done!
'Tis wrong that pity should be sufferer
By her sweet nature, as she is, enduring
Its gentle throes in vain—which are relieved
When of avail to those for whom they're borne;
Else, pain incontinently! 'Twas not right
To promise audience to her, her affliction
Past help! What canst thou give her but thy tears?
And what are they? They cannot ope for her
Her father's prison-door, nor wash away
The writing of the warrant which decrees
His term of life. Thou shouldst have sent her word
"It could not be"—"It was of no avail."
'Twas rending thy own heart, without repair
Of hers! 'Twas idle waste of agony!
'Twas feeding hope thou knew'st was sure to die!

Adol. Is there no hope?

Iden. There! Were it fate herself
Said "No," thy sanguine nature would not rest,
But ask again with thought she'd change her mind.
His doom is fix'd—within three days, he dies.

Adol. On Saturday?

Iden. Yes; Saturday's the day.

Adol. Take me from Prague! I would not be in Prague
That day! I see the reverend old man
Dragging along the street, as on the day
I saw him first—by accident approaching
The casement as he pass'd!—his silver'd head
Uncover'd, an unseemly sight, beset,
As 'twas, by fierce array of threatening arms,
In hands wherein the pith of life was fresh,
Which better, far, it had become to give
Protection to him than oppose offence.
'Twas only for a moment, but the form
Of the old man has never left me since.
I will not be in Prague the day he dies;
I wish I could forget when that day comes!—
What day is this!—When will be Saturday!
O to have time, 'twixt this and after then,
A blank, that I might pass that cruel day,
Nor know on't till 'twas gone!

Iden. My sweet Adolpha,

A strange and wondrous compound is thy heart,
Frame of all moods, from gravest to most light;
And all in like extreme! Thy mirth defies
All other wing!—Thy sadness dives a depth
Where none can follow thee! No eye such stores
Of tears! No cheek such treasury of smiles!
Most natures have their bias, thine hath none,
Save goodness which directs and poises all!
My love! thou shalt not be in Prague, that day.

Adol. But *must* it come?

Iden. See there again! Thy heart
Will take no answer, save what pleases it;
And, yet, is positive, as well as I,
It cannot have.

Adol. My father's Governor!

Iden. The Emperor is his master.

Adol. Let him be!

Were I my father, in a case like this,
I would gainsay the Emperor!—refuse
To do his bidding, or evade obedience—
Do anything but take the old man's life!
'Tis murder, Idenstein! He was no spy!—
Came on no hostile mission!—nothing did
Could threaten damage to the Emperor's cause—
Only fulfill'd an act of private duty,
To her whom once he served! Why should he die

For that? What reason that a giant hand
Be laid on him to crush him to the grave!
A breach of duty were true duty here,
Where duty, done, is breach of all things, else.
For all thou say'st, I can't believe he'll die,
Knowing, as I know, he has no right to die;
I'll see my father.

Iden. Counsel treason to him?

Adol. That is not treason, which is not unright! [*Goes out.*]

Iden. Her virtuous will, will never own a let;
What it desires, she ever counts upon
The power to do. [*Listens.*] Ha!—Now she pleads to him.
That were well urged, if earnestly were well!—
I do not hear his answer, but by the tone
'Tis "No!" She comes to the attack again!
A friend in need, Adolpha, with a chance
In thy favour—Here thou hast none!—Again, I guess
His answer by the tone!—He will not yield—
Nor still will she give up—No advocate
Like one that pleads with heart!—What! Tears?—I'm sure
She weeps!—This rain, Adolpha, won't avail!
Duty's a stern defendant; thou must lose
Thy suit:—Here comes the governor!—Kind heart!
What sun is there!—No cloud can keep it out;
But, lower it ne'er so thick, some beam breaks through

Enter GENERAL KLEINER.

Gen. Kle. I can't endure it!—won't—Give me a siege,
With a starved garrison and gaping breach!
Foundations honeycomb'd with mines!—the foe
A hundred men to one!—Or give me a battle
With bayonets cross'd, and cannon, mouth to mouth,
And I'm myself! I know my duty, and
Can act the man!—But save me from the eyes
Of a woman, when she weeps, and I the cause,
And cannot stop her tears!—Sdeath! would they drown me,
I'd thank them! In the name of patience, why
Cannot one make a woman list to reason?
Why does that drive her mad which keeps us sane?
Talk reason to her, and her wits are gone!
'Sdeath! I can govern Prague; but not a woman!

Iden. Why, what has happen'd, General?

Gen. Kle. Don't call
Me General!—call your wife General!—she knows
My duty better than I know it myself!
Tell her of customs, order, penalties,—
You talk of things that she can treat as the thread
She cuts with her hus'ife scissors! I have served
For fifty years—for more than half that time
Have managed men by units, tens, and hundreds,
And tens of hundreds!—I can't rule a woman!

Rule her?—That's not the question!—Would it were!
She must rule me!

Iden. But what's the matter?

Gen. Kle. Matter?

That wife of yours—that girl—that waxen doll—
Adolpha! Is she not your wife; and don't
You know it? Did you ever say her “nay,”
And prosper?—ever know her to give up
The point her heart was fix'd on? She'd make hay
In December! Mars—a profitable wife!
She'd have the Helder thaw with a north wind
In January, when the frost is biting
With all its teeth! She'd stop the tide half in,
When it runs strongest. She would stop the sun,
The moon, and all the stars!

Iden. What has she done, sir?

Gen. Kle. Desired me ope the prison-door that's shut
By the Emperor's order—let its tenant out—
Laugh at the warrant for his death, that's seal'd
By the Emperor's hand! When I refuse her that—
Which, did I grant her, I should lose my head,
And that were falling somewhat grievously
Short of my due proportions—she insists
Upon a respite, while she goes herself
To plead his cause before the Emperor!
She'd do it! And when I refuse her that,
She prays me set my wits to work, and pass
A fiction off for fact—not killing him,
Although he seem to die! She'd make me out
A necromancer! When she's balk'd of that—
Which on as valid reason I refuse
As one to weave with gyves upon his hands,
She opens on me volleys of loud sobs,
With showers of tears, that try my mettle more
Than hail of lead! I wish you'd rule your wife—
Cut her right short, when she's unreasonable—
Say “No” to her, and nothing else for a year!
You spoil her, Idenstein!—A woman never
Should have her own way!

Iden. Sir, you gave it her
Before I did.

Gen. Kle. A fool, sir, has a use!
He is a beacon to a man, that's wise
Enough to profit by him.

Iden. All her fault
Is but excess of too sweet nature, sir,
Which ever makes another's griefs her own.

Gen. Kle. And mine, too! Punishment is done away
In Prague! Offenders 'scape, or I must smart
For their penalties! Nor ends it there. No ache,
For ten miles round, but I must share a twinge,
Chance it to come unto her knowledge!—I

Expire with woes of orphans, widows, maids
 Forsaken, wives in childbirth—all degrees
 Of human, female sufferings—I am in
Articulo mortis, every day of my life,
 And not a pang my own!

Iden. And then you die, sir,
 A good man's death with benisons all round you!

Gen. Kle. I'd waive the benisons to 'scape the death!

Iden. Indeed—I know you better, sir!—you would not.

Gen. Kle. I would!—But who comes here?

Iden. As I believe,
 The daughter of the prisoner, sir. Adolpha
 Has promised her an audience.

Gen. Kle. We are attack'd
 In flank and rear—Tell her it won't avail!
 Persuade her to retreat! Say we have taken
 Our ground, and we will keep it, stand or fall!

Iden. Had not you better do it, sir?

Gen. Kle. Not I!
 I'm a recruit, against their mode of fighting.

[Retires hastily, and sits down near a table.]

Enter MEETA and a Servant.

Serv. [Speaking low to MEETA.] I'll tell her you are here.

[Goes out.]

Iden. You wish to see
 The daughter of the Governor?

Meeta. I come
 To see her. I am promised I should see her.
 She said it, as I am inform'd,—indeed
 As I am sure she did. She is a lady:
 She cannot break her word. A noble lady,
 She would not break her word! A lady, sweet
 And pitiful—she will not break her word!

Iden. She will not; but I pray you for her sake,
 Absolve her from it, and forego your suit,
 Which will avail you nought. It will not lead
 To what you want; what is the worth on't, then?
 And wherefore shouldst thou urge it?

Meeta. I am come
 To see the daughter of the Governor;
 Come on her promise, as I have been told,
 And thou just now hast granted. If she wills
 To break her word, then as I came I go!
 But if she waits for me to give it back,
 She'll wait till I am dead—and then she's free,
 As death solves all accounts.

Iden. Why give her pain;
 And bootlessly?

Meeta. My father is in prison,
 And he is doom'd to die within three days,
 And I his child, with the faculty of speech,

Stand not acquitted if I hold my tongue ;
 But, could I find for it no audience else,
 Must make it ring to stones for mercy to him
 While yet he breathes ! how then should I be dumb
 To human hearts, that are not hard as stones—
 At least should not be so.

Iden. Leave me to plead
 Thy cause to her. Instruct me what thou'dst have,
 I'll urge it to her, and with reasons back
 Which thou wouldst never dream of,—be there but
 A glimpse of hope, I'll see it and point out,
 And make it clear to her, and if her heart
 Misgives her, I'll encourage her. I'm her friend—
 Her husband.

Meeta. You are not my father's child !
 You would give up, where I would still go on !
 That which would make me plead the heartier,
 Would silence you ! O, sir, in such a case,
 Would *you* petition for your father's life
 At second-hand ? But help me ! O do that !
 And I will pay you with a life of thanks !
 And pardon me that I reject your counsel.—
 I cannot take it, sir !—Indeed I cannot !
 My heart, and mind, and sense, are capable
 Of nothing but one thing—to try all means,
 However light or weighty, feasible
 Or unfeasible, rational, or wild, or mad,
 Allow'd or disallow'd—short of a stain
 Would spot my soul—to save my father's life !

Gen. Kle. 'Sdeath ! am I chain'd here, that would be hence,
 Yet lack the power to go !

Iden. The lady comes.
 So—speak to her, since you will have it so.

Enter ADOLPHA and Servant, who goes out.

This is the daughter of the prisoner.

Meeta. [*Running up to ADOLPHA, and kneeling.*] Bless thee !

Adol. Poor girl !—No ! Not thy knees !—Thy arms ! Here
 are mine.

Meeta. O no ! my knee ! my knee !—Or would you lift
 My body up, lift first my heart, that's low
 As misery can lay it ! I have a father,
 And he's in prison, and I must not see him.
 I am his only child, and I have travell'd
 Hundreds of miles, and when I reach the gate,
 'Tis shut on me, and human beings keep it !
 He dies on Saturday, and they can tell me
 I shall not see his living face again,
 And nothing has he done why they should kill him !
 Nothing !—no more than you have ! An old man
 With a pale brow, sweet face, and silver hair,
 That would not hurt a fly !—and he must perish,

And no one to console him, and his daughter
 Within the wall's breadth of him ;—She must not touch him,
 See him, or speak to him !—You are a child !
 You have a father ! Think of me and mine !
 Speak for me ! Will you ? Pray the Governor
 To bid him let me in and see him ! Won't you ?
 Are you going ? Will you speak for me ? Will you get them
 To let me see my father ! Do—or here
 I'll lie at your feet for ever ! [Falls prostrate.]

Gen. Kle. Idenstein,
 Can't you stop crying ?

Iden. Sir, can you ?

Adol. [Going to GENERAL KLEINER.] My father !

Gen. Kle. I'll not be shaken.

[Crossing her—she holds him on the other side, kneeling to him.]

Meeta. [Partly raising herself and missing ADOLPHA.] Has
 she gone to do it,
 Or means she to escape me ?—Ha ! she's there
 Kneeling to some one !—'Tis the Governor !
 Mercy—O—mercy !

Gen. Kle. They are taking me
 By storm ! The citadel is theirs ! I see
 No use in holding out !—Eh ! Idenstein ?
 Must I surrender ? She shall see her father !

[MEETA falls swooning at his feet—Picture—Scene drops.]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Outskirts of GENERAL TORSTENSON'S Camp.*

Enter RODOLPH, GEROLD, LODOWICK, and others.—Soldiers dragging in JOSEPH.

Ger. He is a spy !

Lod. Drag him along to the guard.
 Let him be tried at once and executed.

Ger. Nay, kill him without trial. He's a Jew
 Blasphemer, reprobate, extortioner !

Jos. Nay, sirs ; but hear me !

Rod. Hear him.—Let him speak.
 Give him fair play.

Ger. Fair play, and to a Jew !

Jos. You give a thief fair play—a murderer—
 And why not me, who neither kill nor steal ?

Ger. Not steal !

Rod. Have patience !

Jos. Have I stolen from you ?
 What have you lost, to lay to my account ?

Is it your charity—I have it not ;
 But I will spare you some of mine ! Perhaps
 The stock to serve a Christian may be small,
 Yet such as 'tis, it would not let me use
 A Christian, though a thief or murderer,
 As you use me !

Ger. You hear him ! Leave him, sirs,
 To me. I'll do his business !

Jos. A brave man !

Ger. Leave him to me, sirs ; I account a Jew
 But as I would a rat !

Jos. Obey him, sirs.

Let go your hold of me, and loose the rat,
 Before that dog ! I have known a cur to turn
 Before as small a thing ! I mean it, sirs.
 But as you leave a rat to use his teeth,
 Nor arm the dog you set upon a rat,
 So that, whate'er the odds, 'tis bite 'gainst bite,—
 Give me equality of weapons too,
 Hand against hand, at large, and arm'd or not,
 And see, if, be the Jew indeed a rat,
 The Christian nearer doth approach the man !

Rod. The Jew has fairly said.

Jos. Will fairly do,
 Give him fair play ! Sirs, you are Christian men !
 A Christian father lies in jeopardy
 In Prague—a reverend teacher of your faith.
 Man hath summ'd up his days ; the number's out
 On Saturday, unless Heaven sends him aid ;
 He has an only daughter, who essays
 To succour him, and spies salvation here,
 But cannot come to bring't—a Christian too—
 So she must send for't ; and thereto employs
 A friend, whose counsel, coffers, roof, hands, blood,
 She has, and welcome too, at her command ;
 And Christian men—You, sirs !—won't suffer him
 To do her will, because he is a Jew !

Ger. We knew not this !

Jos. You would not know it, sirs !
 You would not hear me !—would not let me speak !
 Laid you not hands upon me one and all ?
 Vied you not in reviling me ? with death
 Did you not threaten me, nor till now give time,
 To put a word of deprecation in,
 Because I am a Jew !

Lod. We have wrong'd the Jew.

Ger. I fear we have.

Rod. Nay, sirs, I know we have,
 So let's ask pardon of the honest man.

Jos. Ask me no pardon—It is given, ere ask'd.

A venial fault's atoned for, when 'tis own'd.
 And pray you, sirs, if you have friends yourselves—

As friends, however fenced in this world, lie
 Within the leap of danger—bring me straight
 To one call'd Roselheim, who beareth rank
 Among your forces.

Rod. Here the very man
 Comes, as he knew your need. You'll not complain?

Jos. I never break my word, although a Jew.

[*RODOLPH and the rest go out*]

Enter RUPERT, MADAME ROSELHEIM, and ESTHER.

Do I not speak to Major Roselheim?

Rup. You have named me, friend!

Jos. Thanks, sir, to call me so.

Rup. You have an errand for me—have you not?

Jos. Yes; but a messenger more welcome far
 Than I, this letter, sir, will tell it you—

I say more welcome—though it brings bad news.

Mad. Ros. From Meeta, is it not?

Rup. Yes, mother.

Mad. Ros. What

Says Meeta?

Rup. Presently!—I'll tell you all

Anon!

Mad. Ros. I read the letter in your face;
 The old man's doom is seal'd,—not quite, but yet
 Almost as sure?

Rup. You have guess'd it, mother.

Mad. Ros. Rupert,

Is there no chance for him?

Rup. There is a chance.

Mad. Ros. What is't, my son?

Rup. I may not tell you, madam.

Mad. Ros. Were it a breach of confidence?

Rup. No, mother,—

Of duty only. Movements, which are language
 To a soldier, give me hopes, and these I am free
 To share with you, and do so—not their cause.

Mad. Ros. Tell me his plight in every circumstance.

Rup. Learn it in one, he dies within two days,
 Unless—

Mad. Ros. What, Rupert?

Rup. Learn the rest from hope!

Mother, you said the Governor of Prague
 Was schoolfellow and choice comrade of my father,
 From boyhood even to majority,—
 That golden age of life, when hearts that join
 Are riveted by metal, weatherproof,
 That shines and keeps, while those it holds decay.
 You would have sent to him; nay, gone yourself;
 But, save in extreme need, I would not have it.
 Send now—indite a letter—state your claim,
 And crave delay to the last fraction

Of time that duty will allow—and let
 Our Esther be the bearer, under guidance
 Of this good man. Come there no other profit,
 'Twill place her nearer Meeta—should she need her.
 She ne'er divines my care had conn'd this news. [Aside.
 Before this herald brought it.

Mad. Ros. Esther!

Esther. Madam?

Mad. Ros. Fear you to go to Prague?

Esther. To no place, madam,
 For you.

Mad. Ros. 'Tis with a letter to the Governor.

Esther. I'll take it, madam: I'll do anything
 To leave the camp.

Mad. Ros. Why, what's the matter, Esther?

Esther. That boy—that Hans, is going fast to ruin.

Before they stop, they'll make a soldier of him.

Already has he got their swagger, madam;

Drinks, swears,—yes, madam, on my life he does!

I'll never take the poor lad home again

The simple thing he was.

Mad. Ros. Then, Esther, take

The boy along with you.

Esther. I thank you, madam!—

Not that I care for Hans; but innocence

Is a rare thing; and should not be corrupted,

While those who know its value can prevent it.

So as you think it right that the poor lad

Be placed in safety, while it can avail him,

I'll take him with me, madam.

Mad. Ros. Do so, Esther;

Go, find him straight, then come at once to me. [Goes out.

Rup. I have a charge for thee, concerning Meeta;

But this at once—should any one you love

Remain in Prague on Friday night, take care

They keep the house. You understand me, Esther?

Esther. Humph! Yes, I think I do! But where is Hans?

Upon my life, I quite forget myself

With care for him. It fits not he and I

Should go together, and be nothing more

Than Hans and Esther! I have quite forgot

Appearances. And what will people say?

Here's a dilemma! If I leave the lad

Behind me, he is ruin'd. They'll be putting,

'Mongst other things, sweethearts into his head.

And I am ruin'd if I take him with me,

And he no right to me, nor I to him!

I could not pass him for my brother—None

Would credit that the selfsame mother bore us!

'Tis out of nature he could be my son.

What shall I do for sake of the poor lad?

There's no contrivance I can hit upon,

But to make Hans my husband. Well-a-day!
 To think that ever it should come to this;
 But, if it can't be help'd, as well be done
 To-day as this day year. 'Tis very plain
 I must be sacrificed, or Hans be lost,—
 And that were cruelty—That must not be!
 And so my mind's made up! I'll marry him!

SCENE II.—*Another part of the Camp.*

Enter HANS and RODOLPH.

Hans. And you have been in battle?

Rod. Yes.

Hans. How often?

Rod. A dozen times.

Hans. And never got a wound?

Rod. Only a scratch.

Hans. I would not mind a scratch,—

I would not mind a dozen scratches! If
 It went no further, bayonets and swords
 To me were things I'd take no more account of
 Than pins and needles. Where, though, was the scratch?

Rod. In the left side—a bayonet grazed me there.

Hans. Odds, that was near! Wasn't it? Very near!

I should not mind one in the foot or leg,
 The hand or arm—but when you come to that,
 Fighting is very dangerous! I don't think
 That I should like to be a soldier.

Rod. Yet

You are the very cut of one.

Hans. The cut?

Am I though?

Rod. One could see it with half an eye.

Hans. It must be very plain.

Rod. You were intended,
 By nature, for a soldier.

Hans. Isn't it strange

That nature never told me so?

Rod. She left you

To find it out yourself, it is so plain.

Hans. And I to live to five-and-twenty years
 And not to see it—No!—Nor any one
 To tell me on't till you did!

Rod. Friends are few;

One may go far ere find one.

Hans. Tell me what

You mean by the cut of a soldier, that hereafter
 I know myself.

Rod. A sharp eye—a smart nose.

Hans. Have I such eye and nose?

Rod. You have.

Hans. Indeed?

I never dreamt on't! I have a smart nose
And a sharp eye? Now would I give a crown
That this were told to Esther! So! Go on.

Rod. You have a pair of shoulders.

Hans. La! you jest!

Speak you the truth now? mean you what you say?
Have I indeed a pair of shoulders?

Rod. Yes.

Hans. 'Tis plain I never knew myself before!
A sharp eye, a smart nose, and pair of shoulders
I wonder what would Esther say to this!
Anything more?

Rod. Ay marry! many a thing.

A chest that's high and full—a front-rank chest.

Hans. Never mind that—I like the rear rank better.
Were I a soldier, I would always fight
In the rear rank—I could do wonders there—
Incredible and never-heard-of things!

What call you those who fight upon their knees
And stomachs, or ensconce themselves behind
Hedges and trees, and when the enemy
Advances, make a run of it, and leave
The rest to fight the battle out?

Rod. We call them
Sharp-shooters.

Hans. That's the very name! I'll be
A sharp-shooter. A sharp-shooter had need
Have a sharp eye, and I have one, you know:
Haven't I? I'm contented with a chest
That's high and full, but not a front-rank one:
And so a sharp-shooter if anything!
We've settled that—Go on—Were Esther here!
She little dreams that Hans is such a man!

Rod. Your limbs are set right under you.

Hans. They are? You do not say so?
And have I got straight legs with all the rest?
Odds what a man I am! I think I'll be
A soldier.

Rod. You'd be sure of it, but once
You saw yourself dress'd in your uniform.

Hans. 'Twould make a little change.

Rod. A little, say you!
'Twould make a hero of you.

Hans. I should like
To see myself a hero! What was that? [A shot without.

Rod. Only a shot.

Hans. O, was it nothing more?
A shot! I thought it was something else! Who minds
A shot?

Rod. 'Tis clear you do not.

But to make Hans my husband. Well-a-day!
 To think that ever it should come to this;
 But, if it can't be help'd, as well be done
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That I should like to be a soldier.

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Have I indeed a pair of shoulders?

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I wonder what would Esther say to this!
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And stomachs, or ensconce themselves behind
Hedges and trees, and when the enemy
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The rest to fight the battle out?

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Haven't I? I'm contented with a chest
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And so a sharp-shooter if anything!
We've settled that—Go on—Were Esther here!
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Odds what a man I am! I think I'll be
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You saw yourself dress'd in your uniform.

Hans. 'Twould make a little change.

Rod. A little, say you!

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Hans. I should like

To see myself a hero! What was that?

Rod. Only a shot.

Hans. O, was it nothing more?

A shot! I thought it was something else! Who minds

A shot?

Rod. 'Tis clear you do not.

[A shot without.

Esther. Poor honest lad! A pity 'twere the world
Should take thee in! Thou ought'st to have a wife,
If but to look to thee! 'Twould not be right
To leave thee without one, a day, an hour;
And such a friend as I'm to thee, at hand.
Would it, Hans? The poor lad! he's quite confounded!
How interesting does he look!—Come, Hans!
You know the way to the chaplain's—I believe—
I think—I'm almost sure I'll take you, Hans!
[*They go out, ESTHER leaning upon him.*]

SCENE III.—*The Fortress of Prague—A Room.*

Gen. Kleiner [without]. Wait you without!

Adol. [without]. We will, sir.

Gen. Kle. [without]. Idenstein,
Keep guard upon her.

Iden. [without]. There's no need, sir.

Gen. Kle. No—

A wife most docile—let her have her way!

[*Enters with the* LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR.

Bring here the prisoner. Do not say 'tis I

That want to see him, nor apprise him how

I am accompanied—

[*LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR goes out.*

I had hoped this task

Would have been wholly spared me,—so relapse

Of consciousness succeeded to relapse,

When nature once gave way, till nearly half

The interval that spares him life was out.

But she recovers and at once demands

Fulfilment of my word.—What now my course?

A veteran take the field without a plan—

Or take the field at all with mutiny:

In the ranks! How come I here? What brought me here?

A regiment of foot, or horse, or what?

Can I believe I came of mine own will?

With aid of mine own limbs, when I would be

A thousand miles away? I must be mad,—

I, that can't bear to see a caged bird!

Mad for a hundred ducats! I would give

That sum—ay, twice as much, to any one,

Would bind me hand and foot and take me hence!

[*Re-enter LIEUTENANT, with MUHLDENAU.*

Lieut. The prisoner.

Gen. Kle. Leave us, good Lieutenant. [*LIEUTENANT goes out.*] Sir—

Muhl. Your pleasure?

Gen. Kle. Pleasure, sir? I have no pleasure! I
I'm an unhappy man, that with the power
To do his pleasure, cannot do it, sir;

I know the track I ought to take, and would, yet always go the way that's contrary.
 Sir, were a fever next door to me, and I knew removing further would prevent me from taking it, I would remove next door !
 There is in some men a fatality
 That knowledge is more loss than profit to them ;
 For what appears their bane as clear as day,
 Is ever sure to be the thing they do,—
 As sight of a descending shell, 'tis known,
 Will fix the man, who sees it, to the spot,
 Where he is sure to die, with limbs at large
 As his that walks or runs.

Muhl. I know you, sir !
 The gracious man they took me first before,
 Who pitied me ; with patient audience heard me ;
 Enjoin'd them gently to entreat me, and,
 Far as their duty warranted, to make
 The pains of bondage light.

Gen. Kle. Have they obey'd me ?

Muhl. They have.

Gen. Kle. You want no comforts they can give you ?

Muhl. They have done all they could to comfort me,
 And Heaven has done the rest. I am to die
 On Saturday—I ask'd not at what hour ?
 Will't please you tell me, sir ?

Gen. Kle. Sir ?

Muhl. I perceive
 It gives you pain to do't. Don't heed, for me—
 He feels not death that uses life to die !
 The hour, sir ?

Gen. Kle. Nine o'clock.

Muhl. What kind of death
 Am I to suffer ?

Gen. Kle. Sir ?

Muhl. I merely ask,
 Because there's something in the form of death
 To poor humanity, however brave
 To meet it. I would know it ere it comes,—
 Look at it—meet it with accustom'd eye,—
 Not to be startled by it at the time
 I should be all myself—not that I trust !
 In my own strength—I have a firmer stay.
 What death am I to die ?—Is't by the sword ?

Gen. Kle. It is !

Muhl. I'm sorry, sir, to give you pain.

Gen. Kle. Sir, I can fight !—I love the fight. I think
 The blast of a trumpet music !—Beat a drum
 In concert with the shrill throat of fife,
 And my heart dances !—It is mirth to me
 To hear the running roar of musketry
 From wing to wing, along the blazing line !

And when the cannon thunders, clap on clap,
 So thick, there's not a breath of pause between,
 I tower as I myself could rule the bolts!
 I have seen death on every side of me,
 And given it not a thought! I have ta'en wounds,
 And never felt them, in the battle's heat!
 But I can't bear to look upon a man
 About to die, and in cold blood! I own
 I am a coward there! Forgive me, sir!
 Have you a friend, sir, whom you wish to see?

Muhl. Is there one near me? You're a merciful,
 Considerate man—you would not, idly, raise a hope—
 You would not raise but to kill it straight!
 Sir, I had learn'd to think a boundary,
 'Twixt me and all things living 'neath the sun,
 Was drawn, and no more to be cross'd by me
 Than the dark frontier of the grave, once pass'd!
 But you have breathed a word, and it is gone!
 I have a child, sir!—If she knows my plight,
 She's here in Prague!—she's at my prison-door!
 Is she?—Is it of her you speak?—That sob—
 In the next room! Is it my daughter's heart
 That's bursting there?—Is it?—My Meeta!—Come!—
 Thou know'st thy father!—Fear not for him—Come!
 He has strength enough to bear the sight of thee;
 But not to want it longer, when he thinks
 Thou'rt near him! Come to him! Come—Come! my child!

[*MEETA enters, rushing into her father's arms; ADOLPHA and IDENSTEIN following.*]

Meeta. You bear it, father!—See!—and so do I!
 O, I was right!—No door that man can shut,
 But Heaven can open! Day succeeded day!
 In vain chance, chance; and mock'd me still! Yet, spite
 of all,
 I cherish'd hope, nor suffer'd it to dwindle;
 And 'tis fulfill'd! I have pass'd your prison-door!
 I see you!—hear you!—I am in your arms!

[*MUHLDENAU and MEETA retire.*]

Gen. Kle. What can Adolpha mean, and Idenstein?
 What can they be about? What do they mean
 By staying here? Why don't they call me hence?
 How cool they stand!—How very cool!—while I
 Am writhing!—Ay!—A pair of callous hearts!
 They would be thought to weep—and if they do,
 They like it! Cough, and seem to wipe your eyes!
 Do! Can't you go, if you can't bear it? Don't
 You know there is a door? and can't you go,
 And take me with you?—Idenstein!—Adolpha!

Adol. Sir!

Gen. Kle. Madam!

Iden. General!

Gen. Kle. Sir!—I hope you're pleased?

Adol. At what, dear sir?

Gen. Kle. To see two human hearts
Bleeding, that you stay here as you were wood,
Or lead, or stone, instead of flesh and blood!

Adol. We thought your duty, sir——

Gen. Kle. My duty!—Pshaw!

You know you never let me do my duty!

Adol. We will withdraw, if you will let us, father!

Gen. Kle. "Let us!"—You never do but what you're let!

[GENERAL KLEINER, IDENSTEIN, and ADOLPHIA, move
softly towards the door.]

Muhl. Who is that?

Meeta. Which?

Muhl. She that's moving towards the door!

Meeta. The lady that obtain'd admittance for me.

Muhl. Bid her stop!

Meeta. My father?

Muhl. Lady, stop! The face,

Well as the form!—I saw thy mother's form,

And now I see her face! Do you not see

Your mother?

Meeta. Father, you forget—She died
When I was but an infant!

Muhl. True!—You're right!

I had forgot! Then see your mother now—

As she was at your age, Meeta!—Yes!—my child!

Meeta. Sir!—Father!—'tis the daughter of the Governor!

Iden. His mind is shaken by imprisonment!

Muhl. No, sir! my heart is struck!—struck by the form
And face of one that's dead—long dead—yet stands
Alive again before me!

Meeta. Dearest father,
It is the daughter of the Governor.
The Governor that's there!

Muhl. I beg her pardon,
I beg her pardon, Meeta, yet I feel,
As I were asking pardon of my child.
Sir, were those eyes your wife's?—Those perfect arches,
As though Art set a copy unto Nature,
To try her cunning!—and that domy forehead
Of feeling, speaking marble!—and the rest
O' the features, with the form therewith consorting!
Were they your wife's? If so, they once belong'd
To mine!—I cannot look on her and think
She's not my child.

Iden. Why are you lost, Adolpha?

Adol. I cannot help it! I am strangely moved.

Iden. At what, my love?

Adol. [aloud]. To hear a father's voice,
As never did it sound to me before!

Muhl. What saidst thou, Meeta?

Meeta. 'Twas the lady spoke.

[Turns up.]

[Aside.]

[Aside.]

Muhl. The voice too! It recalls to me my home,
As from my hearth it came—my very hearth!
But she's the daughter of the Governor!

[Retires to the back of the stage, and sits.]

Meeta. As drops his heart the hope, mine takes it up!

Gen. Kle. Idenstein—

Iden. Sir—

Gen. Kle. Let us go.

Iden. Adolpha!

Meeta. Stop!

No!—Not a trait! No more resembles him
Than I!—while as I look at her, methinks,
Touches, as of a face I can't recall,
Yet feel as once I knew, start forth from it!
You're troubled, sir—nor yet are you at ease, [*To IDENSTEIN.*
So many tokens call him owner, yet
The precious thing that bears them not his own!
Incredible! impossible—my heart
Protests against it!—yearns for her! cries out
She's his and mine, and will not be gainsaid!
Are you the daughter of the Governor?

Adol. I am—I am his only child!—

Meeta. You are!

I kiss your hand and ask your pardon! but—
What scar is this upon your wrist?—No knife
Could make this wound, and in your father's house
How came you by it? Was it by a knife?

Adol. No, by a sword.

Meeta. When?

Adol. When I was an infant.

Meeta. Where?

Adol. At the siege of Magdeburg!

Meeta. The siege

Of Magdeburg! How came you there?

Adol. I know not.

Meeta. [*To GENERAL KLEINER.*] Sir, are you—

Are you her father?—Is he, her father? [*To IDENSTEIN*]

Both

Look doubt at one another! Providence!
What can this mean? Why are you silent, sir?
If she you call your daughter—Look at me!
Don't turn away!—If she you call your child
Was in the siege of Magdeburg, I lost
A sister there.—Is this she? O, a word
To save my heart from bursting! Her nurse, whose hand
I held by, carried her,—a soldier seized
The woman by the hair—

Gen. Kle. I smote him down,
And saved the child! [*MUHLIDENAU rushing forward, throws
himself at the Governor's feet, clasping his knees.*]

Meeta. 'Tis she! She's ours! She's found! My sister!

Muhl. Meeta!

Thy sister! What! in one another's arms!
Give her to me!

Meeta. Here, take her to thy heart!

Into it, father!—Sister!—Father!—Heaven!

[*MUHLDENAU and ADOLPHA embrace—MEETA rushes up to them, and kneeling, clasps them both.—Act ends.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Joseph's House.*

Enter MEETA and ADOLPHA.

Adol. What place is this, and wherefore am I here?

Meeta. Art thou afraid of me, my sister?

Adol. No.

Meeta. Then fear not where I bring thee, nor the cause.

O! my new other self, were it a time,

I'd give thee vouchers of heart-coin'd words

To prove thy safety—good of every kind—

Dear to me—worlds, ay, worlds beyond my own.

Dost trust in me?

Adol. I do.

Meeta. Wilt do my bidding—

Wilt do't to-night, however questionable

Inexplicable, strange?

Adol. Your words are darkness,

Which yet I trust myself to, with your looks

Of Truth and Love for guides. I'll do your will.

Meeta. My sister, my dear sister, let me think,

And lay your cheek the while a space to mine;

There, there, thou prompt'st me sweetly with the touch

Of thy sweet cheek. I have comfort for thee, sister—

Our father will not die.

Adol. How know you that?

The Governor has heard no tidings yet—

The distance greater, than his courier,

Despatch'd on the instant, with the prayer for mercy,

Could compass in a day!

Meeta. He will not die.

Adol. My sister!

Meeta. What!

Adol. Your words are oracles

I trust to, with a thousand human fears

To shake my heart.

Meeta. Our father will not die!

Now listen. There will be a storm to-night—

Fierce rain with deluge, high uprooting wind,

Thunder and thunderbolts. Look in mine eyes,

And let them serve thee for interpreters,
To make my dark words clear. 'Twill break around
Our father's prison. There its rage will play,
Nor, till it bursts an entrance to his dungeon,
To set him free, stop smiting! Canst thou read,
Without a glossary? This house will be
Beyond its range!

Adol. My husband, and my father!—
cannot help it, he has been my father
In all things but my blood!

Meeta. There's nothing wrong.
'Tis very right. I'll call him father too;
So think him, feel him too, for thy dear sake.
And now thy promise, sister! Weigh my words.
Thy husband and the Governor might fall;
Here they are safe.—Don't interrupt me, sister,
Time's brief and swift, and action must be instant,
Or not at all.—Thou must indite a letter,
Urging their prompt attendance here—alone—
On matter of as pressing moment as
Question of life or death. I know the thought
Thou wouldst give utterance to—'Tis not an act
Of treachery, but duty! Thou didst promise
Obedience to me.

Adol. Hardly dost thou task me,
But I'll respect my word.

Meeta. Then prove it straight,
Sit down and write the letter. O, my sister,
Confide in me! Do it without stint!—with cheer!—
That's right—you will!—go on!

ADOLPHA writes—Enter JOSEPH.

Jos. The trusty friends
I told you of are come.

Meeta. I thank you. Armed?

Jos. A weapon each beneath his gaberdine.

Meeta. How many are they?

Jos. Twenty.

Meeta. That is right;
Their number makes resistance idle. Yet
As courage does not take account of odds,
And slightest scath, to them, were wound, to us;
'Twere well they should disarm your visitors
On the unprepared instant. Is it not strange
I grow more calm as the dread crisis comes
Of this momentous night? You are aware
Whate'er befalls, the motive of the act
Holds you absolved;—besides, it is not yours,
But mine!

Jos. I take it all on mine own head.

Meeta. There mustn't be a light when they come in,
Lest it betray thy friends! Go send me now

That servant of the Governor who came
Along with us. Is't written, sister?

Adol. Yes.

Meeta. Thank you, my sister; now direct it.

Enter Governor's Servant.

Sir, seek straight the Governor, and give him this.

[*Servant goes out.*]

Now, sister, come, and be thou strong of heart:

I'll give thee clearer reasons, on the way.

This night of death shall bring us days of life. [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*Another Room in JOSEPH'S House.*

Enter HANS.

Hans. I wonder when the honeymoon begins!
I'm one day married, and no glimpse on't yet!
Or shall I ever have a honeymoon?
Or is there such a thing? Until I see it,
I'll not believe it. Twenty leagues of travel
Is not a honeymoon! Strange company,
That care no doit for me, nor I for them,
Are not a honeymoon! A dinner snapp'd,
Not caten, can't be call'd a honeymoon!
'Tis Esther's fault! No sooner were we married,
Than off she sets for Prague—nor leaves me choice,
Except to stay behind, or come with her.
Of course I do the latter, as beseems
A married man. I know my duty, but
I see no honeymoon, or chance of it!
No merry-making!—not a soul I know
To give me joy! No presents, visitings,
Feastings, and dancing, as, I know, are wont
At other people's marriages, with scores
Of little tricks and rogueries they play.
I have not had a laugh—and here I'm left,
Five hours alone! Is this a honeymoon!
And if it is, I would I ne'er had been
A married man! I'm fit to hang myself!

Esther. [*Entering.*] Husband!

Hans. Well, wife?

Esther. You look not happy!

Hans. No.

Esther. And why, dear chuck?

Hans. Because I am not so.

Esther. Not happy!

Hans. No.

Esther. Why, am not I thy wife?

Do I not treat thee kindly, lovingly?

Do I not call thee hubby, spouse, and chuck,

And every other kind of tender names?

What want'st thou to content thee, dearest love?

Hans. I want a honeymoon.

Esther. A honeymoon?

Why this is it! 'Tis on, my honey-love,
And almost all to come.

Hans. 'Tis on? 'Tis not!

Be this the honeymoon, I'm sick of it!

I want no more of it! Will have no more.

Esther. O cruel—cruel Hans.

Hans. If I had thought

To pass such honeymoon as this, I ne'er
Had married.

Esther. Would you have me break my heart?

Hans. I have no comfort with thee!

Esther. Do I live

To hear thee say so!

Hans. No delight in thee!

Esther. No, Hans? You'll make me wish that I were dead!

Hans. I took thee for a helpmate—thou art none!

I scarce set eyes upon thee! Thou art out,

Five hours and more, and hast not told me where.

Esther. I went on business, Hans, that's not my own.

Hans. Thou hast no business with such business! Fit

I mope at home, and have a wife that ought

To keep me company! I'm fairly turn'd

From honey into gall! What business was it,

Took thee away?

Esther. I may not tell.

Hans. You must!

Esther. I won't!

Hans. I'll show her, I'll be master! Now,

Or never—I'm resolved! One whisper'd me,

As from the chaplain's we came out—"Beware!—

Look to your wife, sir!"—'twas the corporal who

Had, ne'er, beguiled me—"mind! or she'll put on

What is no proper part of woman's gear!"

So I'll begin in time! What business was it

Took thee away?

Esther [*gently*]. I will not tell thee, Hans!

Hans [*angrily*]. You won't?

Esther [*more angrily*]. I won't, Hans!—Mind what you're
about!

You know me!

Hans [*angrily*]. Yes!—but yet you know not me!—

I will not have it!—won't allow it!

Esther. What?

Hans. To have thee gadding in the honeymoon—

If honeymoon it be!

Esther. If honeymoon

It be?

Hans. I say it is no honeymoon!—

Where is the wine?—where are the cakes?—where are
The sports and games?—where are the friends and neighbours?
Why are we here, and not in Mariendorpt?
I thought we should go thither, when I made
A wife of thee!

Esther. You made a wife of me?

You say it, sir?—'Twas I made you a husband!

Hans. And if you did, I'll keep myself a husband—
I will be master!

Esther. Hear him!

Hans. Lord!

Esther. O dear!

Hans. And lord of that, I'll not be left alone,
Again!—I won't!—to fret myself from wine
To vinegar!

Esther. Look, sir!

Hans. Look, ma'am!

Esther. I tell you—

Hans. And I tell you!

Esther. I'll make you know yourself!

Hans. You will?—I'll run away to Mariendorpt!

Esther. [*Frightened.*] You won't, dear Hans?

Hans. I'll be divorced—I will!

Esther. You'll kill me, Hans!

Hans. I'll take another wife!

Esther. [*Crying.*] O dear! O dear!
Was it for this, I let you win my heart—

O'ercome my hatred of your tyrant sex—

And, from my state of happy singlehood,

Transform me to a miserable wife?—

O Esther! Esther!—woman never knows

When she's well off, until she is undone!

Hans. Don't cry! 'Twill spoil your eyes! My wrath is
soothed,

I'm your own Hans again—your loving Hans!

I'm pacified—I'm calm'd. The storm's blown o'er;

All's smooth and still, no ripple now, nor breath.

Esther. I'll tell thee all, Hans.

Hans. No, you shan't!—I say

I will not hear a word—a syllable,

As I'm your husband.—Let her have her way,

So that she keeps to wearing her own clothes!

Esther. I thank you, Hans. I see you love me still.

Hans. Love you?—Adore you!—Idolize you!—But

'Twill never do to want our honeymoon! [*They retire.*]

Enter abruptly GENERAL KLEINER and IDENSTEIN, followed by
JOSEPH.

Gen. Kle. What means this violence?—What men were
those

Disarm'd us in the hall? The lady where,
That sent for us?

Jos. No ill is meant you, sir,
But good. The men disarm'd you, are your guards,
Trusty for you, to death. The lady's gone.

Gen. Kle. 'Tis all thy wife's contriving, Idenstein.

Iden. You know the value of a thousand ducats?

Jos. I do.

Iden. I'll give you them to set us free.

Jos. Took I the sum, 'twould be to peril that
Were worth it to you, countless times—your lives!

Iden. Our lives!

Jos. They are in my care.

Gen. Kle. Look, honest friend;

Wilt thou consent to set us free at once,
There's not a unit in two thousand ducats,
But I will count thee down.

Iden. Thou art a Jew,
And wilt not list to reason?

Jos. Not such reason

As that. There's not in Prague that bulky sum
Could weigh—the matter of a line—the scale

Wherein my pledge to keep you here is put—

My love—my gratitude—my principle—

Which I respect, my lord, although a Jew!

Gen. Kle. Dost thou reflect that I'm the Governor?
That I can punish thee? That I can throw thee
Into a dungeon?—put thee to the rack?

Load thee with chains, consign thee to the galleys?
Hang thee, good Jew?

Jos. I know it very well.

I know thou hast the power, although thou lack'st
The will, to execute a cruel deed;

And when befits the penalty to fall,

Usest the keen sword with a melting eye.

Every one knows the Governor of Prague!

Gen. Kle. Every one knows him for the fool he is!

Jos. Although I am a Jew, I honour you, sir—
The hospitality I force upon you—

Except compulsion—I have taken care

Should stand acquitted of all disrespect.

That room presents refreshment—that beyond

Repose. This night alone you are my guest,

And shall, to-morrow, fully learn the cause

Why you are here; and then be free to go,

So pray you find contentment, if you can,

Where profit cannot come of discontent. [Goes out.

As ESTHER and HANS are following, IDENSTEIN beckons the former.

Iden. Hark you, fair lady, you are beautiful.

Esther. I know I am.

Hans. She knows she is.

Iden. She is;
And beauty argues goodness—and if goodness
Be not made up, 'mongst other precious things,
Of generosity, 'tis negative,
And proves of no account!

Hans. What's negative?

Iden. A diamond necklace clasp'd around your neck,
A score of ducats for each several drop,
And each the twentieth fraction of the set,
Would not be out of place.—Is there a window
Whence one might drop himself into the street?

Hans. No, there is not! You put no necklace, sir,
About her neck! 'Tis mine, and not her own!
Go, Esther!

Esther. Sir, I am not to be bribed.

Hans. That's right—but go! [*ESTHER goes out.*]

Iden. You are her husband, friend?

Hans. I am.

Iden. And well she chose you.

Hans. So she did.

Iden. Art thou in service?

Hans. Yes.

Iden. Wouldst thou not rather
Be thy own master?

Hans. Who would not?

Iden. Wouldst like
To be a hero?

Esther [*without*]. Hans!

Hans. I'm coming!—Yes, [*TO IDENSTEIN.*]

Knew I a way, was safe.

Iden. You have a scruple
To be a soldier?

Hans. A small scruple.

Esther [*without*]. Hans!

Hans. I'm coming.

Iden. Would you like to have a farm?
Have your own serving-men and serving-maids?
Keep your own swine and kine? Ride your own horse?—
You'd look a man on horseback!

Hans. So I would!

Iden. All these are thine, wilt go an errand first.

Hans. Where?

Esther [*without*]. Hans!

Hans. I'm coming, Esther.

Esther. Come along!

Hans. Where?

Esther. [*Appearing at the door.*] Hans!

Hans. I'm coming, Esther.

Esther. Come at once! [*Pulls him off.*]

Iden. We are a pair of birds, sir, in a cage.

Gen. Kle. Birds?—We are fools! This comes of my good-
nature!

It still has been my ruin! I was made
 A dunce by my mother, for my fondness of her!
 What lack'd in spoiling me, aunts made up—
 I was so docile, biddable to them!
 My sisters brought me to destruction by
 Improving my good temper, which they made
 Their ready scape-goat in all kinds of scrapes;
 And which their gentle friends in dimity
 Employ'd, to get me into divers straits,
 From which to extricate myself were only
 Entanglement anew! My wife completed
 My ruin! My sweet disposition made her
 So fond of me, to please her I would feign
 Sickness, that she might play my nurse. One thing
 Alone was wanting to my quite undoing—
 A child, and that, as nature would not find me,
 I must provide myself with—thy Adolpha—
 Who, for her own ends, keeps us prisoners here!
 What's to be done?

Iden. To bear what must be borne.

They, that command us, are a host to one.

Gen. Kle. Let's in, then, and submit.

Iden. I follow, sir.

Gen. Kle. No fool, so trick'd as a good-natured man!

[They go out.]

SCENE THE LAST.—*A Dungeon.*

MUHLDENAU *asleep on a couch*—MEETA *sitting near, with*
 ADOLPHA *kneeling by her, sleeping with her head on MEETA'S*
lap.

Enter LIEUTENANT.

Meeta. Softly!—They sleep!—Your news is bad?

Lieut. It is. The answer is arrived. With fruitless search
 They have sought the Governor. Not finding him,
 On me, as second in command, devolved
 The painful task to break the packet open,
 Which gives no hope of life.

Meeta. It was expected:

We are prepared.—So, please you softly tread,
 As you depart again.—*[LIEUTENANT goes out.]*—He has
 awaked her!—

Sleep, sister, sleep!

Adol. *[Starting.]* What time of night is it?

Meeta. It is no longer night, but morning, sister.

Adol. Morning?

Meeta. The chimes of a new day have struck
 Again and yet again!

Adol. How often, sister?

Meeta. Thrice.

Adol. It is very still.

Meeta. Too still, but we shall hear
The sound of stirring shortly.

Adol. You are sure?

Meeta. I am.

Adol. You comfort me!—you are so calm!

Meeta. Sister, we both had need be calm!—Look there!

Adol. How sound our father sleeps!—Knows he our hope?

Meeta. No!—it might draw his thoughts from better hope:
From hope that doth ever in possession end;
Hope that hath naught of earth in it, to crumble
T' the grasping. Sister, you don't know my father!—
On earth, he has lived in heaven;—Don't fear for him!
He is that happy man, who is prepared
To live or die!

Adol. He will not die!

Meeta. Speak softly!

He is awaked! It can't be help'd. Dear sister,
Let it not melt thee, should he talk of death.

For tears are catching things, and nature's nature,
Long as it breathes. Let's countenance the calm
Which his pure spirit keeps.

Muhl. Meeta.

Meeta. Here, father.

Muhl. What, both my children!—both!—Adolpha, too!

Is not this merciful, to have you here?

That my last earthward sigh I am permitted

To breathe upon your heads in blessing you?

What is the time, my Meeta?—How far on

Is my last day within this prison-house?

These walls of clay, in which the spirit's pent—

That's going back to him who lodged it here!

'Tis nothing else! How easy, then, to die,

To him who thinks it so! What is the time?

Meeta. Another day is onward.

Muhl. To that window

Comes the first beam that's herald of the sun—

See if there's sign of the fair messenger,

Or shall I do't, my child?

Meeta. No, father.

Muhl. Well,

How is it?—Is there mark on the horizon—

A blending as of light with darkness, or

Something that's plainer?—Tell me, child! Mine eye

Is fix'd on day, to which noonday is night!

Meeta. 'Tis early morning—a dun glow—almost
A streak.

Muhl. The boundary of yesterday

Is cross'd some hours. Come hither, both of you.

Kneel down! The longest time that man may live,
 The lapse of generations of his race,
 The continent entire of time itself,
 Bears not proportion to eternity,
 Huge as the fraction of a grain of dew
 Co-measured with the broad unbounded ocean!
 There is the time of man—his proper time:
 Looking at which, this life is but a gust,
 A puff of breath, that's scarcely felt ere gone!
 Then comes a calm that lasts. My youngest one,
 Least known, but not less loved—My Meeta—

Meeta. Father,
 Am not I part of both?

Muhl. My noble child!
 My Christian-trained child! I did thee wrong
 To fear exception thou mightest take at that
 Which made my children equal. My found one!
 My blessings on thee full as upon her,
 That never left my side. Join hands with her!
 Love her for ever! as thyself. Two hearts
 That join in truth, become a wall of rock,
 'Gainst which the surges of the world may lash,
 But only break themselves.

Adol. I hear a noise!
 'Tis—

Meeta. Sister, peace. What heeds a noise?

Muhl. I think
 I heard it too—and understand it; but
 Whate'er it is, it matters not to me.
 I see—the light comes on. Meeta, my child,
 Thy father gives thee thanks for hours and hours
 Of happiness. You have let fall her hand—
 Take it again—never let go the love
 That now unites thy sister's hand to thine!
 And take thy father's blessing, free and full,
 Which Heaven attests that thou hast merited,
 Who never wast but dutiful to me! [Noises nearer.]

Adol. Hear you the sounds again, and louder?

Meeta. Peace!
 Dear sister, if it is to come, it will. [Noises again, and nearer yet.]

Muhl. What, Meeta? These are not accustom'd sounds.
 There is a shining something in thine eye,
 That looks like hope—and thine, my other child!
 My children! is there hope? I'm human still!
 I'll live for you, my children.—[Noises again.] Those are
 shouts.

They move not with such sounds who come to see
 The spectacle of an untimely death—
 For human nature, howsoever wild,
 Is human still. [Noise very loud, as of a general attack.]

Meeta. Yes, father, there is hope!

Enter LIEUTENANT.

What come you for?

Lieut. The prisoner

Meeta. For what?

Lieut. To place him in securer keeping.

Meeta. Hence!

He's in his children's arms—or leave him here,
Or take us altogether.

[Shouts, and reports of musketry and cannon.]

Soldier enters.

Soldier. You are call'd for *[To LIEUTENANT.]*
To look to our defence! They come upon us
A thousand men to one—the castle's lost!

Adol. He's saved—

Meeta. Not yet!

[Noise as of something giving way and falling.]

Adol. Hear you—They burst the gates!

Meeta. It may be something else.

Muhl. Ah, now to die— *[Noise as of people ascending.]*

Were pain!

Adol. The rush of steps!

Rup. *[without].* Burst in the door.

Meeta. 'Tis Rupert's voice—My father's saved—He lives!

Rup. *[Bursting in with others.]* My Meeta! honour'd
father!—we have come

With life and liberty!

Meeta. We thank you, Rupert!

Rupert, I knew you would not let him die!

How far is Prague your own?

Rup. This quarter, Meeta,

Which yet commands the rest! This post was long

Our general's aim! yet he so doubtful kept

His eagle hovering, the mighty pounce

Your strait accelerated, none could guess,

Until his fated quarry felt its power!

Meeta. Send trusty friends, and strong, along with me;
Speak not, but let thy answer be the act.

Rup. Dismiss your care! It is not needed, Meeta.

The faithful Hebrew met me in advancing,

And took in charge a chosen band to watch

Success, and bring thy friends to thee.—By this

I doubt not they are here—

Enter JOSEPH, conducting GENERAL KLEINER and IDENSTEIN.

The Governor?

Gen. Kle. Yes, sir,—but not your prisoners—that honour
These ladies claim.

Adol. Forgive us, father!

Gen. Kle. What!
Now thou hast found thy father?

Adol. Father still!

Muhl. Give me the Hebrew's hand—the Christian's friend—
His elder brother, though with difference.

Jos. All men should thus be brothers.

Hans. We shall have
Our honeymoon at last.

Esther. Be silent, Hans.

Meeta. Let all be silent, save the grateful hearts,
That speak in humble confidence to you. [To the audience.

END OF THE MAID OF MARIENDORFF.

LOVE:

A Play,

IN FIVE ACTS.

TO JAMES MUSPRATT, ESQ.,

OF LIVERPOOL.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

A few honest words may convey a great deal.

This PLAY is justly and joyfully dedicated to you.

With affection and gratitude,

Yours,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

November, 1839.

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN IN 1839.)

<i>Duke</i>	Mr. COOPER.
<i>Prince Frederick</i>	Mr. SELBY.
<i>Ulrick</i>	Mr. DILLEAR.
<i>Sir Rupert</i>	Mr. J. VINING.
<i>Sir Otto</i>	Mr. FITZJAMES.
<i>Sir Conrad</i>	Mr. WIGAN.
<i>Huon</i>	Mr. ANDERSON.
<i>Nicholas</i>	Mr. AYLIFFE.
<i>Stephen</i>	Mr. W. H. PAYNE.
<i>Falconer</i>	Mr. COLLETT.
<i>Herald</i>	Mr. C. J. SMITH.
<i>Empress</i>	Mrs. BROUGHAM.
<i>Countess</i>	Miss E. TREE.
<i>Catherine</i>	Madame VESTRIS
<i>Christina</i>	Miss LEE.

LOVE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Room in CATHERINE'S House.*

Enter CHRISTINA and NICHOLAS.

Chris. As thou lov'st thine ease, Nicholas, restrain curiosity. It is a steed that runs away with a man, without his knowing it, until it has thrown him. The danger is never found out until the mischief is done. Besides, it is a woman's palfrey, which it befits not a man to ride. What signifies it to thee, who comes into the house, whatsoever be the hour, so it is I that let him in?

Nic. Doubtless, Mistress Christina; yet a knock at the door at two o'clock in the morning—and the door opening at that hour, to let a man into the house—and that man a gay young spark—may make a body wonder, though he have no more than the ordinary stock of curiosity.

Chris. Propriety, Nicholas, belongs to no one hour out of the twenty-four, more than to any other hour. It was fit that the young spark should come into the house, or I should not have let him in. And now mark what I say to you. Play not the house-dog any more. Do you mind? Let not your watchfulness interfere with your sleep; else, besides your sleep, it may peril your bed and board; but, if thou hearest a knock when thou liest on the weary side of thee, and wakest, draw thy nightcap over thine ears, and turn on the other side; and, so, to sleep again—yea, though it be four o'clock in the morning, good Nicholas!

Nic. I shall mind.

Chris. Do so, and be wise. Duty, that becomes a busybody, ever turns itself at last out of doors. Hast thou a good place, friend Nicholas?

Nic. Not a better in all Germany!

Chris. Then take my advice, and keep it.

Nic. I will.

Chris. Do! [*NICHOLAS goes out.*] My mistress will be discovered at last, well as she disguises herself, and plays the man. I wish she had not taken this fancy into her head; it may bring her into trouble. Ha! here she is; returned to her proper self. Who would believe that this was the spark I let into the house at two o'clock in the morning!

Enter CATHERINE.

Cath. [*Speaking as she enters.*] Christina!

Chris. Madam!

Cath. O, here you are! Was not Nicholas with you just now?

Chris. Yes; he is only this moment gone. I have just been giving him a lesson. He saw you when you came home last night.

Cath. Hush! Secrets should be dumb to very walls!

A chink may change a nation's destinies,
And where are walls without one—that have doors?
Voice hath a giant's might; not a dwarf's bulk;
It passeth where a tiny fly must stop;
Conspiracy, that does not lock it out,
Fastens the door in vain. Let's talk in whispers,
And then with mouth to ear. 'Tis strange, Christina,
So long I practise this deceit, and still
Pass for the thing I am not—ne'er suspected
The thing I am—mongst those who know me best, too.
Yet would that all dissemblers meant as fair!
I play the cheat for very honesty,
To find a worthy heart out and reward it.
Far as the poles asunder are two things,
Self-interest and undesigning love;
Yet no two things more like, to see them smile.
He is a conjurer, Christina, then,
Can tell you which is which! Shall I be won
Because I'm valued as a money-bag,
For that I bring to him who winneth me?
No!—Sooner matins, in a cloister, than
Marriage, like that, in open church! 'Tis hard
To find men out! They are such simple things!
Heaven help you! they are mostly bird-catchers,
That hold aloof until you're in their nets,
And then they are down upon you and you're caged,
Nor more your wings your own. I have scarcely slept!

Chris. You run great risk, methinks, for doubtful gain.
I wonder oft, when thus you play the man,
You should escape offence; for men there are,
By nature brawlers, and of stalwart limb,
Who of their fellows take advantage, when
Of slight and stinted frame; and, at the best,
You make, in sooth, but a green and osier man!

Cath. And there's a little airy, fairy thing,
Call'd spirit, which makes equal statures, thews,
Ay, between dwarfs and giants, my Christina;
Whereof, although a woman, I have a share
Which ekes out my dimensions, and defies
Those to o'erbear me that o'ertower me.
Besides, I have full pockets! That's enough!
They call me "The young stranger," and forbear
All question, since I warn'd them 'twas my mood
To see the world *incognito*; which I vouch'd
With a free purse, that made the table ring

As I cast it down; and startled some to see,
As Fortune's loaded horn had leap'd among them.

Chris. And think you none suspect your proper sex?

Cath. Sure on't; for once suspected, 'twere found out.

Chris. How do you hide the woman?

Cath. With the man!

It was my girlhood's study. Bless thee, child,
Good shows beat, hollow, bad realities!

When I have dress'd my brows, my upper lip

And chin *en cavalier*, I make a vow,

From such a time to such, I'll play the man.

And so I am! One quarrell'd with me once—

'Twas when I first began this masquerade—

"Look you," quoth I, "I never quarrel but

"To fight, nor fight except to kill; and so

"I make my mind up, sir, to die myself;

"So spare your *carte* and *tierce*.—Set points to hearts,

"And at the signal, in!" His fire I quench'd,

As water turneth iron cinder-black,

In a white heat duck'd sudden into it!

Chris. But of your lovers?

Cath. Tell me who they are?

Alas, to have a rival in one's gown!

For 'tis the same thing—'tis your property!

The fabric of the sempstress to outdo

Heaven's fashioning—your body and your face;

A piece of web, a needle and a thread,

Give worth to them that lies not in themselves!

Yet so it is with dames of noble birth,

And how much more, then, with a wretched serf!

For, though ten times enfranchised, such I am.

But what my betters stoop to, day by day

I spurn, Christina, spurn! nor deign to wed,

Except the man that loves me for myself!

Chris. And such a man, methinks, Sir Rupert seems.

Cath. Ah! he is poor!

Chris. And what of that? He is proud,

And seems as jealous of his poverty

Almost as you are.

Cath. Yes! He makes no suit.

He ever follows me, yet stands aloof;

While others lay close siege.

Chris. And of his rivals,

Prefer you any?

Cath. No. Have I not said,

When tax'd with paying court to me, the rest—

Yea one and all—instead of boasting me,

My person, or my mind, for their excuse—

Set forth my wealth; and ask if there's a man,

Who would not wed a serf, with such a mine?

Chris. Sir Rupert sins not thus.

Cath. Sir Rupert? No!

I bear him hard when I enact the man,
Which yet he suffers for the sake of Catherine,
My mad-cap cousin, as I call myself.
He is jealous of me; eyes me as he might
A spaniel like as soon to bite as fawn.

He never speaks of me—I mean myself—
Unless enforced; and then, to end the theme.

"Sir Rupert," said I to him once, with more
Than wont civility—O, could you see

What a fire-imp I am when I'm a man—

"Sir Rupert," said I to him once, "methinks

"Your friends are sorry judges of good fruit;

"And, for an apple, like to choose a crab.

"Deal frankly with me. Kin, you know, are kin,"

"All the world over! now, a hug and kiss,

"And boxing faces next! It follows not,

"You know, since I am coz to Catherine,

"Because she has the toothache, I have one!

"So, tell me, fair Sir Rupert,—for, indeed,

"Although a spoil'd boy, as 'tis lawful for

"A mother's pet to be, I wish you well,—

"What think you of my cousin Catherine?"

And what was his reply? Beginning, middle,

And end, as much as this,—*"She is a woman."*

But, sooth, the answer came in such a tone,

Each single word might pass for a whole book.

Chris. I am sure Sir Rupert loves you. He has all

The signs of a lover.

Cath. What are they?

Chris. He sighs.

Cath. Sighs! Listen to me! [*Drawing a deep sigh.*] There,

girl! what think you now?

Of that, for a sigh! and say you I'm in love?

I will coin sighs for you, fast as the mint

Coins ducats. Shows are all uncertain things,

Unless the cheek indeed grows lank and pale—

Yet that may be with frequent lack of dinner.

So, 'tis 'twixt the heart and appetite it lies!

O for a sign that were infallible,

And he to show it, whom I would see it on!

Chris. Sir Rupert?

Cath. What is that to you? Dear girl,

Whoe'er it be, I pray that I may love him!

The countess flies her hawk to-day. I'll make

Essay of mine.

Chris. A most strange lady, she!

A form of flesh, and heart of ice.

Cath. Not so.

A heart, Christina, all possess'd of pride—

That hath no place for any passion, else.

Suitors pursue her, still she yields to none,

But, hard requital! pays their love with scorn;

That, out of troops, remains at last but one,
The Prince of Milan.

Chris. Will she ever love?

Her heart is scarce the soil to root love's flower!

Cath. No telling how love thrives! to what it comes!
Whence grows! 'Tis e'en of as mysterious root,
As the pine that makes its lodging of the rock:

Yet there it lives, a huge tree, flourishing,
Where you would think a blade of grass would die!
What is love's poison, if it be not hate?

Yet in that poison, oft is found love's food.
Frowns that are clouds to us, are sun to him!
He finds a music in a scornful tongue,

That melts him more, than softest melody—
Passion perverting all things to its mood,
And, spite of nature, matching opposites!

But, come, we must attire us for the field.
The field!—the field!—Christina, were't to take
The field in love!—a fair and honest fight!

I wonder, be there one true man on the earth?
But if there be, I one true woman know
To match him—were he true as native gold.

Chris. I think Sir Rupert one.

Cath. Sir Rupert!—Umph!

If he were rich, and I as poor as he,
I'd tell you "yes," or "no," within a week.
Heaven keep me from the proof!—I should not like

To find Sir Rupert out! Come. Let me wed
The man that loves me, or else die a maid! *[They go out.]*

SCENE II.—*An Apartment in the Duke's Castle.*

The COUNTESS—HUON reading to her.

Countess. Give o'er! I hate the poet's argument!
'Tis falsehood—'Tis offence. A noble maid
Stoop to a peasant!—Ancestry, sire, dam,
Kindred and all, of perfect blood, despised
For love!

Huon. The peasant, though of humble stock,
High nature had ennobled.

Countess. What was that?
Mean you to justify it? But, go on!

Huon. Not to offend.

Countess. Offend! No fear of that,
I hope, 'twixt thee and me! I pray you, sir,
To recollect yourself, and be at ease,
And, as I bid you, do. Go on.

Huon. Descend,
You'll grant, is not alone nobility,
Will you not? Never yet was line so long.

But it beginning had; and that was found
 In rarity of nature, giving one
 Advantage over many—aptitude
 For arms, for counsel, so superlative
 As baffled all competitors, and made
 The many glad to follow him as guide
 Or safeguard; and with title to endow him,
 For his high honour or to gain some end
 Supposed propitious to the general weal,
 On those who should descend from him entail'd.
 Not in descent alone, then, lies degree,
 Which from descent to nature may be traced,
 Its proper fount! And that, which nature did,
 You'll grant she may be like to do, again;
 And in a very peasant, yea, a slave,
 Enlodge the worth that roots the noble tree.
 I trust I seem not bold, to argue so.

Countess. Sir, when to me it matters what you seem,
 Make question on't. If you have more to say,
 Proceed—yet mark you how the poet mocks,
 Himself, your advocacy; in the sequel
 His hero is a hind in masquerade!
 He proves to be a lord!

Huon. The poet sinn'd
 Against himself, in that! He should have known
 A better trick, who had at hand his own
 Excelling nature to admonish him,
 Than the low cunning of the common craft.
 A hind; his hero, won the lady's love.
 He had worth enough for that! Her heart was his.
 Wedlock joins nothing, if it joins not hearts.
 Marriage was never meant for coats of arms.
 Heraldry flourishes on metal, silk,
 Or wood. Examine as you will the blood,
 No painting on't is there!—As red, as warm,
 The peasant's as the noble's!

Countess. Dost thou know
 Thou speak'st to me?

Huon. 'Tis, therefore, so I speak.

Countess. And know'st thy duty to me?

Huon. Yes.

Countess. And see'st
 My station, and thine own?

Huon. I see my own.

Countess. Not mine?

Huon. I cannot, for the fair
 O'ertopping height before.

Countess. What height?

Huon. Thyself!

That towerest 'bove thy station!—Pardon me!
 O, wouldst thou set thy rank before thyself?
 Wouldst thou be honour'd for thyself, or that?

Rank that excels its wearer, but degrades him.
 Riches impoverish, that divide respect.
 O, to be cherish'd for oneself alone!
 To owe the love that cleaves to us to nought
 Which fortune's summer—winter—gives or takes!
 To know that, while we wear the heart and mind,
 Feature and form, high Heaven endow'd us with,
 Let the storm pelt us, or fair weather warm,
 We still are loved! Kings, from their thrones cast down,
 Have bless'd their fate, that they were valued for
 Themselves, and not their stations; when some knee,
 That hardly bow'd to them, before,
 Has kiss'd the dust before them, stripp'd of all.

Countess [*confused*]. I nothing see that's relative in this,
 That bears upon the argument.

Huon. O, much,
 Durst but my heart explain.

Countess. Hast thou a heart?
 I thought thou wast a serf; and, as a serf,
 Hadst thought and will none other than thy lord's;
 And so no heart—that is, no heart of thine own.
 But since thou say'st thou hast a heart, 'tis well!
 Keep it a secret;—let me not suspect
 What, were it e'en suspicion, were thy death.
 Sir, did I name a banquet to thee now,
 Thou look'dst so?

Huon. To die, for thee, were such.

Countess. Sir!

Huon. For his master oft a serf has died,
 And thought it sweet,—and may not, then, a serf
 Say for his mistress, it were bliss to die?

Countess. Thou art presumptuous—very—so no wonder
 If I misunderstood thee. Thou'dst do well
 To be thyself, and nothing more.

Huon. Myself—

Countess. Why, art thou not a serf? What right hast thou
 To set thy person off with such a bearing?
 And move with such a gait?—to give thy brow
 The set of noble's, and thy tongue his phrase?
 Thy betters' clothes sit fairer upon thee
 Than on themselves, and they were made for them,
 I have no patience with thee!—can't abide thee!
 There are no bounds to thy ambition, none!
 How durst thou e'er adventure to bestride
 The war-horse—sitting him, that people say
 Thou, not the knight, appear'st his proper load?
 How durst thou touch the lance, the battle-axe,
 And wheel the flaming falchion round thy head,
 As thou wouldst blaze the sun of chivalry?—
 I know—my father found thy aptitude,
 And humour'd it, to boast thee off? He may chance
 To rue it; and no wonder if he should;

If others' eyes see that they should not see,
Directed by his own.

Huon. O, lady—

Countess. What?

Huon. Heard I aright?

Countess. Aright—what heard'st thou, then?

I would not think thee so presumptuous,

As, through thy pride, to misinterpret me.

It were not for thy health!—Yea, for thy life!

Beware, sir. It would set my quiet blood,

On haste for mischief to thee, rushing through

My veins, did I believe——! Thou art not mad;

Knowing thy vanity, I aggravate it.

Thou know'st 'twere shame, the lowest free-woman

That follows in my train should think of thee?

Huon. I know it, lady.

Countess. That I meant to say,

No more. Don't read such books to me again.

I would you had not learn'd to read, so well,

I had been spared your annotations.

For the future, no reply, when I remark.

Hear, but don't speak—unless you're told—and then

No more than you're ask'd;—what makes the answer up,

No syllable beyond.

Enter Falconer with Hawk.

My falconer! So.

An hour I'll fly my hawk.

Fal. A noble bird,

My lady, knows his bells—is proud of them.

Countess. They are no portion of his excellence;

It is his own! 'Tis not by them he makes

His ample wheel; mounts up, and up, and up,

In spiry rings, piercing the firmament,

Till he o'ertops his prey; then gives his stoop

More fleet and sure than ever arrow sped!

How nature fashion'd him for his bold trade!

Gave him his stars of eyes to range abroad,

His wings of glorious spread to mow the air,

And breast of might to use them! I delight

To fly my hawk. The hawk's a glorious bird;

Obedient—yet a daring, dauntless bird!

You may be useful, sir; so wait upon me! [*They go out.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Country. On one side a Ruin, on the other
a clump of lofty Trees.*

Enter PRINCE FREDERICK and ULRICK.

Fred. Now thou hast seen her, tell me what thou think'st.
Has she a heart?

Ulrick. I think her flesh and blood.

Fred. Ay, most sweet flesh, and blood most rich !

Ulrick. Then sure :
She has a heart.

Fred. But where is it ? None yet
Have found it out.

Ulrick. You mean a heart to love ?

Fred. Not such a heart, as well no heart at all !

Ulrick. Men tell a mine a hundred fathoms deep,
By certain signs that near the surface lie.
Are flesh and blood more fallible than clay ?
Take but her face—There's not a feature on't,
But vouches for the mood. Require you more ?
Her limbs and body give you proof on proof.
If these convince you not, essay her voice ;
'Tis of the stop befits the melting vein.
There's nought without but with her sex consists,
Pronouncing her its pattern, passing rich !
And can she lack the heart, the want of which
Would turn such affluence to poverty ?
Prove nature but a niggard, after all,
Where she should seem to be most bountiful ?
She has a heart, sir ; and a heart to love !

Fred. How comes it, then, I plead a bootless suit,
And not a boy at wooing ? Had I chance,
And were the heart, I sought, unoccupied,
I never fail'd to gain some footing in it,
If not instate myself ;—with dames, I own,
Of less degree, ay, and on lighter terms
Than gift of hand for life. Why fail I here ?

Ulrick. Hast thou no rival ?

Fred. None.

Ulrick. Thou art sure ?

Fred. I am.

Dishearten'd at a race that hath no goal,
Or one that seems to fly them, on approach,
My rivals leave the field to me alone.

Ulrick. Thou mayst have rivals whom thou know'st not of.

Fred. No ! I have press'd her father oft, thereon,
And learn'd the history, beginning, close
Of every siege of wooing ; ending each
In mortified retreat !

Ulrick. You may have rivals
Unknown to him. Love joys in mystery ;
And when you think it countless miles away,
Is lurking close at hand.

Fred. You are still at fault.
She has no favour'd lover—cannot have.
The thing is out of chance, impossible !

Ulrick. Call nought impossible, till thou hast proved
That passion hath essay'd it, and been foil'd ;
And set this down—nature is nature still,

And, thought to swerve, is, at the bottom, true.
 Thy mistress is not stone, but flesh and blood,
 Wherein resides the juice of sympathy;
 Which, more refined in woman than in man,
 In woman sways measurably stronger!
 The essence of the sex is that, wherein
 They make a gift of their sweet forms and souls—
 The tenderness for some especial one,
 Who then, 'midst millions, they affect alone.
 High natures—and, of such, the highest, hers
 Rarely encounter their affinities,
 And, till they meet them, all approach repel.
 This holds with woman, most, if not alone.
 So, many live unwed, however woo'd;
 Hers has she found already; so you fail,
 Or it is yet to find, and lacks in you.

Fred. She *cannot* love. As many streams will go
 To make one river up, one passion oft
 Predominant, all others will absorb.

Ulrick. What passion, swoln in her, drinks up the rest?

Fred. Pride.

Ulrick. Of her beauty, or her rank, or what?

Fred. Pride of herself! intolerant of all
 Equality—nor that its bounds alone—

Oppressive to the thing that is beneath her.
 Say that she waives me off, when I advance,
 She spurns the serf that bows to her, at distance.
 Suitor and secretary fare alike!

I woo for scorn, he for no better serves—
 Nay, rather worse comes off.

Ulrick. Her secretary?

Fred. The only one of all his wretched class
 Her presence brooks; for he is useful to her;
 Reads with a music, as a lute discoursed;
 Writes, as a graver the fair letters traced;
 Translates dark languages—for learning which
 She has a strange conceit; is wise in rare
 Philosophy; has mastery, besides,
 Of all sweet instruments that men essay—
 The hautboy, viol, lute.

Ulrick. A useful man
 Your highness draws! What kind of thing is he
 To look upon?

Fred. 'Faith, proper, sir, in trunk,
 Feature, and limb; to envy, though a serf.
 But, err I not, a most unhappy man,
 And for his service, weary of his life!

Ulrick. O love, a wilful, wayward thing thou art!
 'Twere strange! 'twere very strange!

Fred. What?—What were strange?
 What saidst thou now, apostrophizing love?

Ulrick. I said it was a wilful, wayward thing.

And so it is—fantastic and perverse !
 Which makes its sport of persons and of seasons,
 Takes its own way, no matter right or wrong.
 It is the bee that finds the honey out,
 Where least you'd dream 'twould seek the nectarous store
 And 'tis an arrant masquer—this same love—
 That most outlandish, freakish faces wears,
 To hide its own ! Looks a proud Spaniard now ;
 Now a grave Turk ; hot Ethiopian next ;
 And then phlegmatic Englishman ; and then
 Gay Frenchman ; by-and-by, Italian, at
 All things a song ; and in another skip,
 Gruff Dutchman ;—still is love behind the masque !
 It is a hypocrite !—looks every way
 But that where lie its thoughts !—will openly
 Frown at the thing it smiles in secret on ;
 Shows most like hate, e'en when it most is love ;
 Would fain convince you it is very rock
 When it is water ! ice when it is fire !
 Is oft its own dupe, like a thorough cheat ;
 Persuades itself 'tis not the thing it is ;
 Holds up its head, purses its brows, and looks
 Askant, with scornful lip, hugging itself,
 Enacting high disdain—till suddenly
 It falls on its knees, making most piteous suit
 With hail of tears, and hurricane of sighs,
 Calling on heaven and earth for witnesses
 That it is love, true love, nothing but love !

Fred. You would not say the lady loves the serf ?

Ulrick. I would say nothing in particular,
 Save upon proof. Let me together note
 The serf and lady ; I shall speak to the point,
 Or, baffled, hold my peace.

Fred. To that intent
 I sent for thee,—for thou art keen of sight
 To pry into the inmost thoughts of men,
 And find the proper ends towards which they aim,
 Howe'er dissembled by assumed purpose.

Ulrick. Your pardon, sir ; your father bade me come
 To warn you, in these times of turbulence,
 He means to stand aloof and take no part
 Between the barons and the Empress,—so
 Your course you know to shape. What company
 Is this ?

Fred. The countess flies her hawk to-day,
 And these are falconers in advance of her.
 Those nearest us, observe. The lady first,
 Is a rich serf, supposed love-daughter to
 The former duke, who left her well endow'd.
 Those with her are her suitors ; but with none
 She'll mate, believing that her wealth is prized
 Beyond herself,—nor does she widely err

Though some might think her beauty dower enough!
 There is one who follows her, indeed for love,
 A man of heart; a gentleman, but poor,
 Who his revenue spends upon his back;
 I say he *follows* her. He woos her not,
 Through pride, 'tis said, lest he be thought to hunt
 The dross so much he needs;—whence I esteem
 His chance the best. Mark! he is last of all.
 Let us retire a space; there's company
 Enough without us here. Some minutes yet
 Before the countess will alight, and then
 Remains the hill to climb. So bright a day,
 Methinks, will scarce go by without a frown. [*They retire.*]

Enter CATHERINE, SIR CONRAD, SIR OTTO, and SIR RUPERT.

Cath. Spy you my hawk? 'Twas here he struck his bird,
 And vanish'd from my sight.

Sir Otto. Or I mistake,
 Or from his stoop he rose again and skimm'd
 The brow of yonder copse.

Sir Con. I mark'd not if
 He soar'd a second time.

Cath. Were I a man,
 And waited on a lady, used to hawk,
 I'd keep her bird in sight! Sir Rupert, what
 Say you? Where shall we go and seek my hawk,
 Or lurks he whereabouts?

Sir Rup. I saw him not
 At all.

Cath. Not see my hawk at all? You'll do
 For a falconer! So! Had I that boy,
 My hair-brain'd cousin, whom you say you know,
 And fair Sir Rupert hath such fancy for,
 He plays the wasp so well—a novel taste!
 As I can vouch he is indeed no bee,
 To pay you with his honey for his sting!—
 Had I that scape-grace with me, he would find
 My hawk, ere you began to look for it.—
 How loth these friends are to part company!
 Now will I scatter them. [*Aside.*] Who finds my hawk,
 Deserves to kiss my hand, and he shall do it.

[*SIR OTTO and SIR CONRAD run off.*]

What! like you not my wages, sir, you stand
 Nor make a proffer of your services!

Sir Rup. To kiss your hand would be most rich reward,
 If love's rich gift to him who sought your love;
 But, if love's gift, to one alone 'twere made,
 And not to any one!

Cath. Love's gift!—What's that?
 Most thankless proffer made by empty hand!
 Give me bright diamonds, I shall have bright eyes.

When fetch'd desert its value and was poor?—
 A hundred years ago?—but it was left
 A legacy, and then they found it out!
 The world they say is an old churl,—'Tis false.
 Can you afford to feast, you shall be feasted;
 You shall not dine at home one day out of three;
 Nay, you may shut up house, for bed and board.

Sir Rup. You are a *young ascetic*.

Cath. Am I so?

Well, if I am, 'tis in the family—
 Witness my cousin, whom you love so well.
 A young ascetic say you? Sir, I am
 A young Diogenes in petticoats.
 I have strings of axioms. Here are more for you.
 They say that beauty needs not ornament;
 But sooth she fares the better having it,
 Although she keeps it in her drawer.

Sir Rup. Indeed?

Cath. Indeed, and very deed! For I have known
 Bracelets and rings do miracles, where nature
 Play'd niggard, and did nothing, or next to it;
 Beat lotions in improving of the skin,
 And mend a curve, the surgeon had given up
 As hopeless.

Sir Rup. Nay, you speak in irony.

Cath. I speak in truth, speaking in irony;
 For irony is but a laughing truth,
 Told of a worthless thing! Will you have more?
 You shall then. Have you never heard it said,
 Or never dream'd you such a thing as this—
 That fortune's children never yet lack'd wit,
 Virtue, grace, beauty—though it tax'd the owners
 To find them out? Once an exception chanced,
 I know not in what year or part of the world,
 But, while men stared at the anomaly,
 One parasite, less comet-struck than the rest,
 Turn'd up a heap of rubbish of all things
 Good men and wise and men of taste eschew,
 And found them underneath! Take this along though,
 The owner never knew their value, for
 He ne'er had need to go to market with them.
 Why, what a man you are, Sir Rupert! Fie!
 What! not a word to say? Let's change the theme then:
 The argument shall be, that you're in love;
 The which shall I affirm while you deny.
 I say you are in love. Come, prove me wrong!

Sir Rup. I never argue only for the sake
 Of argument.

Cath. Come, come, you have a tongue!
 You are in love—I'll prove it by fifty things.
 And first and foremost, you deny it, sir;
 A certain sign, with certain accidents—

As dulness, moodiness, moroseness, shyness.
 I'd stake my credit on one single fact
 Thou bearest out to admiration—
 A lover is the dullest thing on earth!
 Who but a lover—or his antipode,
 A wise man—ever found out that the use
 Of his tongue was to hold it? Thou must be in love,
 And for one sovereign reason, after which
 I'll give no other—thou dost follow me!

Sir Rup. Madam, although I may not use my tongue,
 I do my eyes and ears.

Cath. But not your feet.
 Will you not seek my hawk, and run a chance
 To kiss my hand—or would it trouble you,
 In case you found my hawk, to use your lips?
 But I forget 'tis now your turn to speak,
 And prove my oaks of arguments are reeds.
 Have you no word?—or am not I worth one?
 Or must I take your side, and beat myself?
 I'll take your side, then. You are not in love,
 Loving yourself too well!

Sir Rup. You wrong me there.

Cath. Why, see what pains you take with your person! How
 You dress!

Sir Rup. 'Tis not my vanity, but pride.
 I am far too poor to put mean habit on.
 Whose garments wither, shall meet faded smiles
 Even from the worthy, so example sways.
 So the plague poverty is loath'd; and shunn'd
 The luckless wight who wears her fatal spot!
 Want, but look full; else you may chance to starve—
 Unless you'll stoop to beg. You force me, lady,
 To make you my severe confessional.
 From such prostration never can I rise
 The thing I was before. Farewell!

Cath. [*Looks out.*] Farewell!
 What! go not to fetch my hawk, and there
 He sits upon his quarry, new alit?
 Or want you earnest of your wages? Well,
 There, kiss my hand, and go and fetch my hawk,
 And then be paid in full.

Sir Rup. If I could speak—

Cath. My hawk were off again, ere you had done;
 So I would lose his service—thou my thanks!

Sir Rup. Nay, I'll secure him straight.

[*Goes out.*]

Cath. I gave him pain,
 Though he has borne it with a noble heart!
 I hope he will not make me weep in turn.
 Symptoms I feel of something like a shower—
 A slight one—but it must not fall. They are gone.
 A noble heart! a very noble heart!

Enter SIR RUPERT.

Sir Rup. I have miss'd the hawk—he has taken wing again.

Cath. 'Twas not your fault—you did the best you could.
I am not angry. There's my hand for you.
Mark'd you which course he took? Then, come along,
We'll hunt for him together.

Sir Rup. Stop—it lowers!
There's shelter here.

[*SIR RUPERT and CATHERINE approach the Ruins—
Enter the COUNTESS and HUON, with Attendants—
PRINCE FREDERICK and ULRICK come forward a
little, but so as not to be noticed.*

Countess. [*To SIR RUP.*] Will there not be a storm?

Huon. I am sure there will.

Countess. I ask'd not you to speak! When you should
speak,

It shall be shown—it shall be plain. Be sure

It is so, ere you give your counsel, sir.

[*HUON retires to the group of trees, and leans against
one of them.*

Do you not think there's threatening of a storm?

Sir Rup. Yes, lady. When the heavens look troubled thus,
Earth can't be long at peace.

Fred. The only man
She brooketh speech from, with complacency.
Observe her, now, when I accost her. Madam,
Will't please you take my escort to your coach,
At the hill-foot I see attending on you?

Countess [*haughtily*]. The rain is on, sir; I am better here

SIR OTTO and SIR CONRAD enter in haste.

Sir Otto. A storm! a storm! Those pitch-black clouds that
speed

In wild career to meet the sun, as though

In envy of his light to blot him out,

Come right against the wind—a token they

Bring thunder!

Sir Con. Yes; I saw a forkéd flash,
And while I held my breath and listen'd, heard
The distant clap. [*To SIR OTTO.*] Avoid the trees; their tops
With boastful towering, dare the threat'ning bolt
To strike them!

[*SIR OTTO and SIR CONRAD approach the ruins.*

Ulrick. Do you note? She does not move—
What keeps her there? Is that the scornéd serf,
Leans drooping 'gainst the trunk of yonder tree,
That lends him treacherous shelter?—Clear as day!

Fred. 'Tis dark as night!

Ulrick. What?—O, the storm! My lord,

I meant not that—your doubts are clearing up.
Look at the serf and lady!

Cath. [*To SIR RUP.*] Pray you speak
To the Countess—tell her she's in danger, there,
Standing so near the trees.

Sir Rup. Madam—

Cath. Apace

The storm comes on! 'Twill soon be overhead—
Ay! there's the thunder now, and loud enough.
She heard not! Call to her again! She bears
That *you* accost her.

Sir Rup. She is fond of you.

Cath. Yes; but you mark'd her scorn of Huon, now!

Sir Rup. Forgive me, madam! but—I pray you, madam!
Come from beneath the trees. It lightens fast—
A bolt may strike you, madam!

Countess. Sir, I hear you.

Ulrick. The peril of the serf transfixes her!
Her life, be sure, is only part of his!
A common act of charity it were,
Command him thence; but, conscious of the cause,
Stronger than charity, that would prompt the act,
And fearing to betray it worse than death;
She perils her own life! It is not right
To leave her there—go to her—take her thence!

Fred. Your pardon, lady, but you must not brave
The lightning. Come into the open space:
There's shelter, with less chance of penalty,
Beneath this time-worn ruin. [*Thunder and lightning.*

Heavens, how near!

Almost together came the clap and flash!
The trees are all on fire—The serf is struck!

[*HUON staggers from the tree—the COUNTESS rushes to him, clasping him.*

Countess No! no!—O Heaven, he's dead! why would he
stand

Beneath the tree!—What, Huon!—Speak to me!
Show me thou hear'st me! Let me see some signs
Of life! Why, Huon! Huon! He is dead!

Ulrick. Lady, he is not dead, but only stunn'd.
'Twas but a shock, although a powerful one.
His colour comes—You see his eyelids ope—
So please you, leave the charge of him to me.

Countess. I thank you, sir—am sorry such a load
Should burden you. Would some of my attendants
Were here, to ease you on't. How dread a thing
Is death, when sight on't makes one not oneself!
Grows it not lighter, sirs?—Ay, there's the sky.
Almost as soon as come, the storm is gone.
Pray leave him to himself. 'Twas but a shock;
It shames me, such a load should burthen you!

Ulrick. As yet, he cannot stand.

Countess. Indeed?—O!—ay!—

It was a very heavy shock. I have a horror,
And always had, of lightning. Do you know
It takes away my wits? Did you not feel
As I did, Catherine, when they thought the lightning
Had kill'd the serf? A dreadful thing is death!
And most of all, by lightning! Where is my hawk?
O, they had charge to bring him after me,
And here they come! Let's meet them, Catherine.

[Going, stops and turns to look at HUON.]

Ulrick. He still grows better, madam.

Countess. Who, sir?—O,
The serf?—Why, Catherine, where's your hawk?

Cath. I have lost him.

Countess. I hope the lightning has not struck him. Come:
We'll have fair weather yet.

Enter two or three Attendants.

Go, some of you,
Relieve his lordship from his load.

*[Two of the Attendants take HUON, and lead him off,
the COUNTESS watching.]*

Ulrick. You see
He is unhurt.

Countess. My lord?—I see.—You take
Great interest in my serf. The sun is out;
My hawk against the field! Come, Catherine.

[All go out, except FREDERICK and ULRICK.]

Ulrick. You see, my lord; and seeing comprehend.
Straight will I to the Duke, and freely tell him
A kingdom to a hawk, she loves the serf!

[They go out, severally.]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—A Chamber in the Castle.

Enter DUKE and ULRICK.

Duke. She loves the serf? Impossible!

Ulrick. My lord,
'Tis true.

Duke. It cannot be! Her pride alone
Forbids belief. More loftily, my lord,
The stateliest of all her ancestors
Ne'er wore his rank, than she.

Ulrick. She loves the serf.

Duke. Give me some reason stronger than averment.

Ulrick. Such I have given already. What, my liege
But love, such contradiction could beget?
When did cold scorn look, speak, and act like love?
Woman or man is known by fits and starts,

More than by habits, which may be put on ;
 For those so take the judgment off its guard,
 That inmost thoughts are shown. With care for him,
 She all forgot herself. Had doubt remain'd,
 It had vanish'd when assurance of his safety
 Restored collectedness, which brought with it
 Slight of the man that, but a moment gone,
 Seem'd essence of her being.

Duke. You are right.

'Tis the solution of the mystery,
 That, with the progress of the season, comes not
 Fulfilment of its promises ; and no sign
 Of blight or canker, but the blossom rich
 As ever knit into the perfect fruit !
 Her girlhood, longer past than some would own—
 Put forth a bloom like many another's prime,
 That often, *then*, I fancied love would come.
 When her prime came, nor love along with it,
 With many a suitor have I sigh'd to think
 Her breast was ne'er intended lodge for that
 It seem'd most fitted for, and little dream'd
 The guest we miss'd, already was within.

Ulrick. And never fear'd the serf ?

Duke. No.

Ulrick. Was't not strange ?

Duke. Not to consider him as I did ; creature
 Made for her pride to vent its mood upon—
 Her pride insufferable—which alone
 Seem'd fruit of her capricious womanhood.

Ulrick. That foil'd you.

Duke. When the serf was but a boy—
 His mistress then an infant—taken with
 His forward parts, I put them to the test
 Of scholarship, which they robustly stood,
 A hundred-fold repaying cultivation ;
 Nor stopp'd I there ; but as he grew to manhood,
 Gave training to him in those exercises,
 Wherein our youths of gentle blood indulge—
 Preludes to feats in peace, and deeds in war—
 That I might boast a serf supreme in arms ;
 As many a knight unwillingly has own'd,
 Accepting challenge to make proof of him.

Ulrick. What didst propose him for ?

Duke. Instructor first,
 Then page and secretary to my child.

Ulrick. Instructor, didst thou say ? Companion of
 Her hours of privacy ? Her age was then—

Duke. Twelve, if I err not.—Yes ; twelve times I then
 Had bless'd the day that gave my daughter birth.

Ulrick. Her spring was mellowing into summer then,
 Young summer ; at whose genial glow, the heart
 Finds wishes and affections shooting up,

Known but by name before, and thrills and swells
With rapture of the strange and plenteous verdure.
She prosper'd with his aid?

Duke. O, wondrously.

Ulrick. And loved at first her tutor?

Duke. Much: but soon

A change, which grew with her, the nearer she
Approach'd to womanhood. 'Twas distance first;
Then sullenness; then scorn, which she gave sway to
Incontinent, and chiefly of those feats
Of high address wherein he match'd the noble,
And which it seem'd her pastime he should practise
For recompense of aggravated spite.

Ulrick. Which he endured for love!

Duke. He dies! That ends it.

Ulrick. Yes; confirming it,
Perhaps. Beware, sir, of a tragedy
So deep! Her scorn may melt at it, and help
Her tears to keep them flowing on until
She weeps her life away. You must not play
With a first passion, once it has taken root.
For it strikes deep—to the foundations even
Of the heart—entwining with the fibres there,
Of life itself, that, pluck the other up,
These, often, come along.

Duke. He shall to exile,
Thousands of miles away, 'midst snows and deserts!

Ulrick. So may you tempt her, sir, with pity for him,
To turn a pilgrim—take up staff and scrip,
And follow him. She scorns him for the scorn
Which others' eyes behold his station with.
Removed from their regards, her rank unknown,
For her rich charms were his embrace, a lodge
She'd change your palace for.

Duke. Impossible!

Ulrick. O, never did achievement rival Love's,
For daring enterprise and execution.
It will do miracles; attempt such things
As make ambition, fiery as it is,
Dull plodding tameness, in comparison.
Talk of the miser's passion for his store—
'Tis milk and water to the lover's, which
Defies the mines of earth and caves of ocean
To match its treasure! Talk of height, breadth, depth—
There is no measure for the lover's passion,
No bounds to what 'twill do!

Duke. Advise me, then,
What's best.

Ulrick. Induce the serf to marry. That
Were cure, in the end, for your fair daughter's passion;
Whose wound were his desertion, so resentment
Would blunt the edge of disappointed love.

For, doubt not, though she ne'er espouses him,
She trusts so far to keep him to herself,
As that he ne'er shall pillow with another.

Duke. 'Tis done. I have a bride for him, at once.
One of his class, enfranchised by the will
Of my cousin, who preceded me; indeed,
Supposed love-daughter to him, and endow'd
With wealth of his, that makes her coveted
As fitting mate, by men of gentle blood.
Her humour 'tis to keep her freedom still;
But to my wish, as soon as known, she'll bend,
Aware I may encoil her in the mesh
My cousin's love or bounty freed her from.
But say I wed the serf to Catherine,
What profit then? My child may still persist
To keep her virgin state.

Ulrick. I should commit
To Heaven the election of her husband;—let
The tournament determine who shall wed her.

Duke. Thereto I have made provision in my will;
And further, sir, as I am due to death
Now many a year, and momentarily
Expect his summons, pray you keep by me
The little space I have to tarry yet;
For on your wisdom I have all reliance.
Your prince, I know, will not gainsay me, here.
And when it pleaseth Heaven to leave my body
Without the breath, it has inherited
So long; no minute lose, but take occasion
Of the fresh flow of sorrow in my child—
When her young heart is soften'd, and will mould
Itself unto his will, who is no more—
To break to her, on this particular head,
My dying testament.

Ulrick. I shall remember.

Duke. So please you, I shall join you with the Empress,
Liege lady and good cousin to my child,
Executor.

Ulrick. I shall discharge the trust.

Duke. My lord, send Huon to me. Question not,
Advise me not. He marries, or he dies. [*ULRICK goes out.*]
Life spent to waste! My pride become my shame!
For this I rear'd her—rear'd to tow'ring thoughts.
A gasp of being only left, and that
To sigh that being has been spent in vain
For her, last shoot of an illustrious tree!
I loved my serf, was vain of him, and made
My vanity to smile through his deserts;
And now, their light is cloud to all my hopes.
Through mine own pride my high aspirings fall.
They shall not fall! Good-bye to ruth! He dares
To love my child—to covet her, I grudged
Surrender of to those could boast estate

Equal to mine! Born at my very foot,
How durst he lift his eyes so giddy high!
He comes. I see! The passion never yet
I dream'd of, stares upon me, in his look,
His air, his gait. 'Tis dead—or he must die!

Enter HUON.

Huon!

Huon. My lord?

Duke. I have been thinking of thee.

Huon. My lord is ever good.

Duke. I have a notion:

'Twould profit thee to marry.

Huon. Marry!

Duke. Yes.

Huon. I first must love.

Duke. And hast thou never loved?

Why art thou silent? Wherefore holds thy tongue
Its peace, and not thy cheek?

Huon. My check!

Duke. It talks!

A flush pass'd o'er it, as I spoke to thee;
And now it talks again—and on the ground
Thou cast'st thine eye. "Thou first must love"—My friend,
Thou art in love already! Art thou not?
Art thou not, Huon?—Never mind, but keep
Thy secret.—I have fix'd that thou shalt marry.

Huon. My lord—

Duke. [*Interrupting him.*] I know it will advantage thee,
And I have look'd around my court to find
A partner for thee, and have lit on one.

Huon [*more earnestly*]. My lord—

Duke. [*Interrupting him again.*] She has beauty, Huon, she
has wealth;

And that which qualifies her better still—
As of unequal matches discords grow—
She's of thy own class, Huon, she is a serf.

Huon [*impetuously*]. My lord—

Duke. [*Interrupting, indignantly.*] My serf!—How now?—
Wouldst thou rebel?

Huon. Rebel, my lord!

Duke. I trust I was deceived!

I did not see defiance in thine eye,
And hear it on thy tongue? Thou wouldst not dare
So much as harbour wish to thwart thy lord,
Much less intent? Thou know'st him!—know'st thyself!
Thou mayst have scruples—That thou canst not help;
But thou canst help indulging them, in the face
Of thy lord's will. And so, as 'tis my will
Thou marry straight, and I have found thy match,
I'll draw a paper up, where thou shalt make
The proffer of thy hand to Catherine,
And thou shalt sign it, Huon.

[*Writes.*

Huon. That I were dead!
 O, what is death, compared to slavery!
 Brutes may bear bondage—*They* were made for it,
 When Heaven set man above them; but no mark,
 Definite and indelible, it put
 Upon one man to mark him from another,
 That he should live his slave! O heavy curse!
 To have thought, reason, judgment, feelings, tastes,
 Passions, and conscience, like another man,
 And not have equal liberty to use them,
 But call *his* mood their master! Why was I born
 With passion to be free—with faculties
 To use enlargement—with desires that cleave
 To high achievements—and with sympathies
 Attracting me to objects fair and noble,—
 And, yet, with power over myself, as little,
 As any beast of burden? Why should I live?
 There are of brutes themselves that will not tame
 So high in them is nature;—whom, the spur
 And lash, instead of curbing, only chafe
 Into prouder mettle;—that will let you kill them,
 Ere they will suffer you to master them.
 I am a man, and live!

Duke. Here, Huon, sign,
 And Catherine is your wife.

Huon. I will not sign.

Duke. How now, my serf!

Huon. My lord, I am a man;
 And, as a man, owe duty, higher far
 Than that I owe to thee, which Heaven expects
 That I discharge. Didst thou command me murder,
 Steal, commit perjury, or even lie,
 Should I do it, though thy serf? No! To espouse her,
 Not loving her, were murder of her peace.
 I will not sign for that! With like default,
 To compass mastery of her effects,
 Were robbery. I will not sign for that!
 To swear, what I must swear, to make her mine,
 Were perjury at the very altar. Therefore
 I will not sign! To put forth plea of love,
 Which not a touch of love bears witness to,
 Were uttering a lie. And so, my lord,
 I will not sign at all!—O, good my liege,
 My lord, my master, ask me not to sign!
 My sweat, my blood, use without sparing; but
 Leave me my heart—a miserable one
 Although it be! Coerce me not in that,
 To make me do the thing my heart abhors!
 I beg no more!

[*The Duke draws his sword, and resolutely approaches*
HUON. At the same minute the *COUNTESS* enters,
unperceived, and stops short.

Duke. Huon, I love thee,
And would not do thee harm, unless compell'd.
Thou shouldst not play with me, and shalt not. Take,
Therefore, thy choice—death, or the paper.

Huon. Death!

Duke. Thou makest thy mind up quickly, in a strait.

Huon. I do not wish to live.

[*Opens his vest, takes the point of the DUKE's sword,
and places it opposite his heart.*

Set here thy point;

'Tis right against my heart! Press firm and straight;

The more, the kinder!

[*A pause.*

Duke. As thou wishest death,

I will not kill thee for thy disobedience.

An hour I grant for calm reflection. Use it.

If, on the lapse of that brief space, I find

The page without addition, thou mayst learn

That even slavery hath its degrees,

Which make it sometimes sweet! Our felons throng

The galleys; but 'tis hard, or we shall find

A bench and oar for thee!

[*He goes out.*

Huon. My lord, come back!

My lord! What now my mind, be sure 'twill be

At the end of the hour! of the day! of my life!—My lord!

He does not hear, or will not. Most sweet cause

Of most insufferable misery,

Wouldst thou not weep at this? Couldst thou look on,

And keep pride sitting in thy woman's eye—

The proper throne of pity—which for me,

The melting queen has yet refused to fill,

But to a stern usurper all abandon'd!—

Wouldst thou not weep? Or would my name alone—

My sole condition set 'gainst all myself;

The vivid thoughts, the feelings sensitive,

The quick affections, passions of a man,

Despite his misery of birthright; flesh,

Warm, warm; of as high vitality as though

His lot had been an heirdom to a throne—

Would that, prevailing 'gainst such odds as these,

Prevent thee? Yes! Thou wouldst not weep for me.

O, knew I what would make thee! Would my corpse?

Then to thy father! own my passion for thee,

Tell him his serf aspires to love his daughter,

Boasts of it, though he sends him to the galleys,

Will glory in it, chain'd beside the felon,

Ay, with the tasker's whip whirling above him,

Reiterate it, when he threatens me,

And when again he threatens, justify it,

On the broad rights of common human nature,

Till with his own hand he transfixes me! [*Following the DUKE.*

Countess. [*Interposing.*] Stop, Huon!—What's the matter?

Huon. Huon—Huon!

Didst thou say Huon—and with gentleness?
Madam—my mistress—I am your slave!—I am nothing
But the poor serf!

Countess. See if that door is free
From list'ners.

Huon. [*Going to the door.*] There is no one here.

Countess. Come in,
And shut it again.

Huon. 'Tis shut.

Countess. Now, what's the matter
With my father and you?

Huon. He bade me sign that paper,
And I refused.

Countess. What is it? Let me see it.

Huon. [*Hands the paper, and watches the COUNTESS while she reads.*] How her eye fastens on the writing—seems

To grasp it, as her hand the paper! What!

Did she start? She did! O, wherefore?—What is this?

Her sweet face, that just now was all a calm,

Shows signs of brooding tempest! Yes, 'tis on—

Lowers on her brow, and flashes on her cheek,

Like cloud and lightning. How her bosom heaves!

What makes it heave? She has let the paper drop,

Yet there she stands as though she held it yet!

And where, but now, all was astir—now, all

Again is stillness! Dare I speak to her?

She is not like to faint—no—no—she breathes!

Her haughty spirit wakes in her again,

Towering, alas! as ne'er it did before.

Countess. [*After a violent struggle, giving way.*] Huon, I die!

Huon. Heavens!—Mercy!

Countess. [*Bursting into tears.*] It is over.

Do not speak to me! Let my tears flow on!

Huon. Flow they for me?

Countess. I told you not to speak.

Huon. Sweet Heaven! your voice is tears!

Your looks are tears; your air, your motions, all

Are tears! floods! floods! to those that course your cheeks,

And fall more bright than diamonds on the hands

Which now I clasp to thee in supplication,

That thou wilt deign this once vouchsafe me audience,

To give my fatal passion vent before thee—

For years pent up within my wretched breast—

And then I'm mute for ever!

Countess. Huon, peace—

I know thou lov'st me!

Huon. Thou know'st it, dost thou?

And sayest it!—and mildly sayest it!

Not with a tone of scorn, not with a threat,

Nor accent yet of cold indifference

For the poor serf, who, body, soul, and all,

Not being worth a tithe of thee, yet dares

To love thee!—dares to wish for thee!—yes, wish,
 Although he knows thee out of reach of him,
 As the sun!—as the stars—a million, million times
 Beyond the sun! The poor despised serf,
 Despised of himself—of thee—of every one—
 Thou see'st he loves thee, and thou deign'st to say it!
 Say it with pity—with most tender pity!
 Behold'st him kneeling at thy feet, and know'st
 The passion throws him there, and suffer'st him
 To stay there!—Let him die there! Let him die
 At thy feet!

[Falls at her feet.]

Countess. Rise, Huon!—Huon!—Hear'st thou me?
 And dost thou not obey me? Wilt thou not?
 Listen to me!—Lo, I entreat thee, Huon,
 By the love thou bear'st me, rise!

Huon. [Rising to his knee.] Again! “By the love
 “Thou bear'st me, Huon!” And thy accents did sound
 Like those of one that love repaid with love!
 Thou start'st at that! and terror, all at once,
 Looks from the eyes, whence something look'd before
 I'd give the vision of my own to see there
 But for one other moment, so it set
 My soul a-blaze with hope!—Can I believe it,
 My arm encircles thee!

Countess. [With forced dignity.] Remove it.

Huon. Ah!

Thou changest!—Yes!—Thou art returning fast
 To what thou wast before.

Countess. No, Huon—but
 Obey me—kneel no longer at my feet,
 But rise. [He rises.] It pleaseth me thou dost my will.
 Huon, wilt do my will?

Huon. Wilt do thy will?
 It is the nature of my blood as much
 As its colour—current! In thy every mood,
 I will obey thee, lady.

Countess. Promise me
 Thou'lt do the thing I bid thee.

Huon. What is it?

Countess. Promise me first, and then I'll name it to thee.
 Huon, wilt do the thing I wish?

Huon. I will.

Countess. But swear thou'lt do it.

Huon. Yes. What shall I swear by?

Countess. Thy love for me!

Huon. Then, by my love for thee,
 I'll do the thing thou bidd'st me.

Countess. Sign the paper!—

Thou art about to speak—but don't—don't, Huon,
 As thou wouldst not offend me; as 'twould grieve me—
 I won't say, anger me—that thou *couldst* offend me.
 Listen! I'll bear that thou shouldst love me, if

Thou signest—else command thee ever from me.
Wilt thou not? Speak not—give me acts, not words.
Or sign it, or begone!

Huon. I'll keep my word,
And so do both. [*Takes paper to table, and peruses it.*]

Enter Attendant.

Countess. [*To Attendant.*] Is Catherine in the castle?
If not, go to her house, and bring her hither.

Attendant. She is in the castle. Now she enter'd it.

Countess. Conduct her to my chamber. Stay. My chaplain—

Tell him, and do it straight, to wait me in
The chapel. Tarry. See that the chapel else
Is clear—Make sure of it. That ascertain'd,
Take post at the door, and mind that no one enter,
Except the serf and the two ladies that
Shall follow him. I shall be one. A mouse
Besides, thou diest! [*Attendant goes out.*]

Huon. [*Signs paper.*] It is sign'd—Farewell! [*Going.*]

Countess. Stay!—To the full thou must redeem thy pledge.
Unless thou marriest, it is not sign'd;
The paper is but air, the ink but water,
Without fulfilling of the written deed;
And thou but jugglest with me, shamefully,
Saying thou lovest me, and for thy oath
Staking thy love, and leaving all undone
As thou hadst sworn by nothing. Thou art bound
To marry Catherine, failing which to do,
Thou dost not love me,—thou art not a man.

Huon. I am indifferent to what I do.
All things of earth are now the same to me;
Good, bad, love, hate, wrong, kindness, life, or death.
What hour you please, I'll marry Catherine. [*Going.*]

Countess. Now! [*Stopping him.*]
This very moment! She will meet thee in
The chapel, whither thou must straight repair.
Thou wilt?

Huon. I will.

Countess. The chaplain thou wilt find
Expecting thee—and, if he be not come
Already, still he will be sure to come.
Thou wilt not juggle with me?

Huon. No.

Countess. Thou darest not—
I mean, thou darest not, as thou lovest me.

Huon. I'll keep the oath, and then, farewell for ever! [*Aside.—Goes out.*]

Countess. 'Tis done! [*Sinks into a chair.*]

Enter DUKE.

Duke. Where's Huon?

Countess. Gone to do thy will.

Duke. Who work'd this miracle? I never dream'd
He would conform to it! Who work'd it?

Countess. I.

Duke. Thou?

Countess. [*Giving him the paper.*] There.

Duke. My child! Thou art thy father's child,
My proud child still! Where is he?

Countess. In the chapel,
By this. The chaplain waits upon him there.

Catherine is in my room, expecting me.

So please you, sir, since I have help'd the match

Thus far, I'll e'en o'erlook the ceremony.

Duke. Do so.

My barque no more is fit for sea;
A ripple threatens it with foundering,
Almost 'tis founder'd now. Did Huon tell thee
How he withstood me?

Countess. All is known to me.

But pray you, for the sake of Catherine,
Grant him his freedom. 'Tis not meet her husband
Should drag the chain, hath been unloosed from her.

Duke. This document accomplishes your wish,
E'en now prepared to win him to my purpose.
I give it freely, for I love the boy;
Ay, now entirely love him! See him married;
And may he plight a happy, happy troth
To her he weds! My child, I am failing fast.
'Tis time—don't heed!—go to the chapel—and
My blessing on the errand takes thee thither.

Enter Attendant.

Ha!—you are come in time, sir! I shall need
Your help to my chamber. Tell the boy, I bless him!
Come hither, bless thee, too! And bless the work
Thou goest to do! While I remember it,
Regard Count Ulrick as thy father's friend,
One of his household now, with sanction of
The Prince of Milan. I am very feeble!
Must to my chamber!

Countess. [*Rushing towards him, and kneeling.*] Bless me
again! my father!

Duke. Again, my child?—Again! [*Blessing her.*
Heaven bless thee! It is wiser—better knows
Thy good—can better help thee to't—ay!
Better than thy father! May it bless thee, then,
And be its will, before thy father's, done! [*Goes out.*

Countess. Now, fail not Catherine, and the die is cast! [*Goes out.*

SCENE II.—*The Corridor of the Castle.**Enter* SIR CONRAD.

Sir Con. What calls the chaplain to his sacred post,
And why this privacy? About to pass
The porch, I was admonish'd 'twas forbid
To all to enter! 'Tis no day of fast,
No hour of customary rites! 'Tis nought
To me. I only wonder at its strangeness.

Sir Rup. [*Entering.*] Where is the Prince of Milan?

Sir Con. In the courtyard—
Unless departed thence this moment.

Sir Rup. Find him,
And bring him to the chamber of the Duke.
If on your way you meet the Duke's physician,
In search of whom I go, he, too, is summon'd,
And tell him so.

Sir Con. Why, what's the matter?

Sir Rup. Woe!
The Duke!—the Duke!—No question, but away!

SCENE III.—*Chamber of the Countess.**Enter* CHRISTINA and the COUNTESS'S Maid.

Chris. My mistress marry Huon?

Maid. Even so!

Now hand in hand with him before the priest;
Unless the knot be tied already—said
The blessing and amen.

Chris. No bridemaid?

Maid. Yes,
My lady.

Chris. What! the Countess! bridemaid she
To Catherine that was before a serf!
Yet she was ever fond of Catherine.

Maid. You should have seen them both as forth they went,
Like two sweet sisters for the altar veil'd.

Chris. A sudden marriage this!

Maid. And lonely, too;
None but the principals admitted—friends
Nor attendants!

Chris. It is strange! Well. Huon gets
A wealthy wife—a freewoman, to boot;
And, sooth to say, a worthy husband, she—
Ay, were she better still—for many a prince
Looks not his rank so well as Huon would,
Were he one. Softly—they return—yes.

Maid. No;
My mistress comes alone. How slow she moves!

Enter the COUNTESS faint ; her Maid runs to support her.

Countess. Help to unveil me, girl. I cannot lift
My hand to my head—and I want air! Remove
My veil. There! Now I breathe!—A minute only,
And all the world seems changed. Is this my room?
Art thou my waiting-maid?—Am I myself?
Where is my father?

Maid. In his chamber, lady.
He is complaining.

Countess. He is very old.
His life spun out into a very film.
I did not gainsay him! Thank Heaven for that!
I would that I could go to him, but sooth
My limbs have done their best to bring me hither.
I am next to dead; almost dissolved to nothing.
Is that Christina? Girl, what do you here?
Home with all haste; your mistress there before you
Waits your assistance with most instant need.

Chris. It is all wonder.

Countess. Art thou gone?

Chris. I am!

[Curtseys and goes out.]

COUNT ULRICK *enters.*

Ulrick. Madam!

Countess. Count Ulrick, is it you? I am glad
To see you, sir; my father told me, or
I dreamt it, he design'd to take you, sir,
Into his service. If 'tis so, I'm glad of it.

Ulrick. I grieve to think my office was a brief one!

Countess. Your office was a brief one!—Speak!—alas!
When silence is a substitute for speech,
The heart must be o'er full of joy or pain!
Enough. I read your errand in your looks—
I am an orphan.

Ulrick. Madam, 'twas a debt
Long due to nature.

Countess. Still, sir, we must grieve
To see it paid. At what a time to leave me!
I cannot pay him half his due of sorrow.

My heart is spent—benumb'd! this shaft of Fate
Lights on a corpse!—a corpse! Alas, my father!

[Weeps.]

[A pause—Enter Attendant, hastily.]

Atten. Madam!

Ulrick. Keep silence! Do not interrupt
The sacred flow of sorrow for the dead.

Countess. No; let him speak; there's matter in his looks.

Atten. The banquet, as you order'd, is prepared,
But neither bride nor bridegroom can be found.

Countess. You mean the bride cannot be found!

Atten. Nor yet
The bridegroom.

Countess. Search for him, and you will find him—
Must find him! *[Attendant goes out.]*

What a cross! at what a time!
When all my thoughts should be with him that's gone!
My father! I adored my father, sir:
Indeed, I did!

Ulrick. Then let me now fulfil
His last behest, whereof the substance this,
In full recorded here—which he enjoin'd
You should be instantly possess'd of—proof
Of his most fatherly regard and care.
Of those who seek your hand you must make choice
Of one to share the labours of the dukedom,
Or else abide the issue of the lists—
Your suitors summon'd to a tournament—
When he who rests the victor wins your hand.

Countess. I am content! I'll do my father's will,
And hide the issue of the tournament,
Or choose myself the man shall take my hand.

Ulrick. Jointly the Empress and myself are named
Executors, to give the will effect.

Countess. It was not needed. It had been respected
Without o'erlooking, how much less enforcement!
My brain and heart are here and there! I haven't
The use of them. Stop! *[Thinks]* Some one told me now
Of something—What was it?

Ulrick. One said the serf—

Countess. Call him that name again!—Whom speak'st thou of?
Huon?

Atten. *[Entering.]* This letter is from Huon, madam.
Mounted upon a steed, your father's gift,
He threw it me, and fled.

Countess. *[Reading.]* "Eternally
"Farewell—Your will is done—I use my freedom.
"Fortune my mistress hence—the richest boon
"She can award me, death!—Once more, farewell!"

O rashness most perverse and ruinous!
Let them pursue him; and provide them with
The fleetest of the stud, and gold beside,
For new relays. If they o'ertake him—if?
They must!—'Tis an affair of life or death!
They must not quit him, but return with him—

Atten. The bride—

Countess. No heed of her. Bring Huon back
By fair means or by foul—persuasion vain,
Let them resort to force—but not to harm
A hair of his head. So be their numbers such
As makes resistance idle. They are sure
To track him, so they lose not time—and see
They do not! If they waste a moment only,
They answer for't. Stay, sir; a purse of gold
To every one of them—of gold, you mark—

So that they bring him back ; and one for you
 In like event. A minute hence, observe,
 I look into the court-yard, and expect
 To see them in their saddles, and away !
 Upon their lives I charge them bring him back ! [*They go out.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Garden of the Castle.*

Enter SIR RUPERT and SIR CONRAD.

Sir Rup. Time is the same. 'Tis our condition's changed.
 The hours hang weary heavy on our hands,
 We scarce could catch when Catherine was here ;
 They went so fleetly by us. Then the death
 Of the Duke hath left a blank, which, while he lived,
 Light offices, with grateful tasks fill'd up,
 And kept our spirits from flagging.

Sir Con. Eventful day,
 The day he died ! Eventful day to us !
 Our Catherine married Huon then, and fled ;
 And Huon fled, avoiding Catherine ;
 Nor since of either tidings—though for him
 Almost the world was search'd. Strange, loathing him
 As she did, with hate almost unnatural,
 How much to heart the Countess took his flight.

Sir Rup. Ay, as a gentle stream would take a rock,
 Suppose one cast sudden into it,
 Damming its channel up, and making foam,
 Where all before went crystal, without ripple,
 But such as noteth gliding. Yes, 'twas strange.

Sir Con. 'Twas very strange.

Sir Rup. 'Twas one of certain things
 We see, yet question that we see, yet there
 We know they are.

Sir Con. She pines for loss of him.

Sir Rup. No, sir ; she takes to heart her father's will,
 Compelling her to choose a husband, or
 Accept of him the tournament may send her.
 And so, she keeps alone, to all forbidding
 Approach to her, except this youth, who sits
 In Huon's place, her secretary now,
 The forward cousin of fair Catherine.

Sir Con. Strange, Catherine should fly, and Huon too !
 That each should purpose, what, if known to each,
 Had one accomplish'd, had sufficed for both—
 To shun the consummation of the rites !
 Strange, that the Duke that very day should die !

Sir Rup. Untimely was the Duke's decease for us—
Prevented by his death from profiting
By the fair opening, which the turbulent
And wild Bohemians for our lances made.
We could not take the field; and, lo, the war,
Ere well commenced, is done; concluded too
By single combat, and the conqueror
A knight unknown till now, whose championship
Had graced the proudest days of chivalry:
Of presence noble as his deeds are lofty,
By that confirming what by these he won—
The favour of the Empress. Yonder comes
The secretary.

Sir Con. Ay, 'tis he.

Sir Rup. I fear

He laughs at us, giving us hopes—as still
You know he does—that one of us shall yet
Make wife of Catherine. A forward spark!
I hate a stripling that's so much the man;
It shows like aping. He grows worse and worse,
Since he hath got his office. For the sake
Of Catherine, alone, I bear with him.

Sir Con. He is like her; never brother more like sister.
I have a word to say to you anon,
Touching to-morrow, when the tournament
Decides who weds the Countess; she declining
To choose a mate herself.

Cath. [without, very loud]. Ho! Holloa!

Sir Rup. Ho!

CATHERINE enters.

Why call you, sir, so loud?

Cath. To make you hear
News, sirs, from Catherine! Shall I whisper it?
She is coming!

Sir Rup. So you told us months ago.

Cath. Well, when she comes, she'll be the welcomer!

Sir Con. I'll wait for her no longer.

Cath. Wait for her?

O! ay!—A man may wait, and wait in vain.
I wait for a wife; though the odds are ten to one,
As I'm a man, I die a bachelor.

Do you know the signs of one?

Sir Con. No; what are they?

Cath. O, various; but the chief, a cautious eye;
And calculating. He that scans a fence,
But seldom makes a clever leap of it;
Nine times in ten he balks his spring and falls,
In the ditch; while he who takes it at a glance,
Goes flying over. Women are shrewd imps!
Behoves a man he thinks not of their pockets,
When he is looking in their faces; for,

Wear he his eye ever so languishingly,
 They'll find he's only busy at a sum
 In arithmetic! Sir Rupert, let me see
 Your face! Don't look so sullen at me. Who
 Can see the sun, if he's behind a cloud?
 That's right. I would not say, but when the woman
 Kind Heaven intends for wife to you shall come,
 You'll marry her.

Sir Con. What say you of my face!

Cath. The same I say of his. By my honour, sirs!
 Though I may pass for an astrologer,
 I never yet, believe me, made pretence
 To read the stars; nor am I adept, yet,
 In palmistry; nor have I studied signs
 As lucky or unlucky omens; yet
 Things can I tell before they come to pass.

Sir Con. But shall I die a bachelor?

Cath. You will,
 Unless it chance upon a certain day,
 In a certain month, in such or such a year—
 At present which is doubtful, but as sure
 As time runs on 'twill come—you get a wife!
 Now, there's a puzzle for you; make it out,
 And tell it me; and then I'll tell it you,
 If you are in the right. Your lot is cast
 In mystery; but for Sir Rupert, his
 Is plain. 'Tis right before me! I can tell
 The year, the month, the week, the day, almost
 The very hour, he will be married, or—
 Not married! yet am I no conjurer.

Where is Sir Otto?

Sir Con. We are going to him;
 He waits for us.

Cath. I'll follow. News wait I
 From Catherine; I'll bring it, if it comes.
 Nay, sirs, beseech you, look not thus upon me
 With eyes of marvel. On my word! indeed,
 And, by my honour,—and, if nothing else
 Will satisfy you, though I have ta'en an oath
 'Gainst swearing, I will give it on my oath—
 I am no conjurer! Another word:
 What I have told you, tell not, as you love me,
 Lest I should pay for it by flood or faggot!
 Upon my life, sirs, I am no conjurer! [*They go out severally.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in the Castle.*

Enter ULRICK.

Ulrick. At length the day almost arrived that brings
 The tournament, whose issue brings to her

A consort for her state—she yields me audience.
 Is it for loss of Huon she has pined,
 And kept herself forbiddingly alone?
 If so, why give his hand to Catherine?
 This is a mystery, the which the more
 I try to sound, deeper and deeper grows;
 While surmise after surmise rises, as
 Report succeeds report of high exploits
 Achieved by this unknown adventurer,
 Who now stands next the Empress, chief in place,
 That even he and Huon are the same!
 Should it be so, and he should come as well,
 What then the issue of her meeting with him?
 This I revolve, and with a troubled heart,
 That sees no end to its perplexity. [Looks off.]
 How changed she is! Her fiery eye is quench'd!
 Her head its haughty carriage hath abated,
 Her cheek is beggar'd of its prideful flush.

Enter COUNTESS [*a parchment in her hand*].

Countess. I have perused the testament, my lord,
 Carefully, word for word, and see no mention,
 Either directly or by implication,
 Touching the quality of him may win me.

Ulrick. No, none is made.—A slight omission only.

Countess. Yet space enough to let my will creep through.
 You say, my lord, you have made proclamation
 Of this fair passage, far and wide?

Ulrick. I have.

Countess. And now expect the Empress?

Ulrick. Yes.

Countess. And with her?

Ulrick. The noblest of her court; a glorious crowd;
 Among the rest her favourite; that youth
 With whose exploits the wondering realm resounds,
 Who, in so brief a space, without a name,
 Has made himself the noblest which the tongue
 Of high renown proclaims.

Countess. That youth! what youth?

Ulrick. A young adventurer, of whom it seems
 Fax fortune is enamour'd—gives him all
 He asks!

Countess. I never heard of him, before.

Ulrick. So please you, madam, you forget till now,
 Since that your father died and Huon fled,
 Save your new secretary, you have deign'd
 With none vouchsafe communing.

Countess. You are right.

I have forgot the world, time, everything!

What is this favourite called?

Ulrick. His titles change

So fast—the former almost new as its
Successor—scarce I know now his present style.

Countess. His name I mean ?

Ulrick. His name I know not, madam.

Countess. What moves my heart, so leaden-dull before ?

Why did it leap at mention of the stranger ? *[Aside.*

Has he been seen by any whom we know,

Any of our vassals, chiefs, or friends ?

Ulrick. I have met

With none, that yet have seen him.

Countess *[abstractedly]*. Happy woman !

Ulrick. Madam ?

Countess. The Empress is a happy woman.

She can reward desert, ennoble it.

Ulrick. So in this instance hath her highness done

With such profusion of munificence,

There are not wanting those who think she sees

Less with an empress, than a woman's eyes ;

And means her bounties but as costly heralds,

Poor to the costlier comer they forerun.

Countess. What ! means she to espouse him ?

Ulrick. 'Tis surmised.

Matter to wonder at, yet justified.

For they report him of a presence noble,

As e'er bespoke a man to challenge honour.

Countess. I never dreamt of an abyss so hideous—

And to be standing on the very brink on't !

Ulrick. *[Alarmed at her vehemence.]* Madam !

Countess. Ay ! what's the matter ? *[Aside.]* I am frighten'd

At myself ! *[Aloud.]* My lord, my spirits are so dreamy,

Things which are not, I see—which are, see not !

Pray do not heed me. For this tournament,

Thus near, without obstruction on my part,

Hath it approach'd ; but, pray you, keep in mind

On what condition ; that—at any time—

The husband it awards, revolting to me,

I am at liberty to make a choice

Between the conqueror and the cloister. So !

I'll read the will again.

[Sits down and reads.]

Stephen. *[Entering hastily.]* News ! news ! my lord.

Ulrick. What is it ?

Stephen. Huon !

Countess. Ha !

Well, what of Huon, is he found ?

Stephen. He is.

Countess. Propitious Heaven, at what a time ! Where is he ?

Stephen. In the suite of the Empress.

Countess. Well ?—Go on !

Stephen. I saw him ! More ; that sun of chivalry,

Hath blazed so suddenly forth in the brief war,

So late gone by and dazzled friends and foes—

The fav'rite of the Empress—

Countess. Well? Go on!

Stephen. Huon and he are one.

Countess. I was sure of it!

Send him away. [*She staggers to a seat, ULRICK supports her.*

Ulrick. Hence, sir.

[*STEPHEN goes out.*

Countess. Don't wonder at me! Don't!

Nor question me, whate'er I say or do!

Listen and do my bidding. I prepare

To give reception to the Empress,—thou

See Huon. Tell him I would speak with him

Soon as occasion serves; or let him *make*

Occasion, and at once—at once, my lord!

[*Aside.*] Where shall we meet? In the garden? No; the garden

Is overlook'd. In the library? No;

We may be subject to intrusion there.

What should prevent his coming to my closet?

What place so fit? Why think of any other?

[*Aloud.*] My lord, bring Huon to my closet. Huon!

The favourite of the Empress I should say.

[*The COUNTESS and ULRICK go out severally.*

SCENE III.—SIR OTTO'S House.

Enter SIR OTTO, SIR CONRAD, and SIR RUPERT.

Sir Otto. 'Tis slight of fortune not to take the chance

She proffers; since the lists must open, sirs,

To every lance, why not adventure ours,

With such a prize? Wait you for Catherine.

I'm for the tournament.

Sir Con. And so am I.

This secretary is a subtle spark.

He has harp'd upon our suit to Catherine,

Awaken'd hopes, we had given o'er as dead,

And pledged himself with oaths she would return

Free, as she ne'er had plighted troth to Huon;

And, yet she comes not. What we take in earnest,

Be sure he only gives in mockery.

Sir Otto. I'm of your counsel, and shall break a lance

To-morrow for the Countess.

Sir Rup. Do so, sir.

I break no lance except for Catherine.

Catherine. [*Entering disguised as a man.*] Who talks of breaking lances?

Sir Otto. Ha! our friend

The Secretary.

Sir Con. Well, sir, what's your news?

Where's Catherine?

Cath. Absorb'd in solving, sir,
A knotty point.

Sir Con. A knotty point; what is't?

Cath. The measure of a lover's patience, sir.

Sir Otto. Does she not come?

Cath. Not till that point is solved.

Now, could you solve it for her, she might come
The sooner.

Sir Otto. 'Tis an hour.

Sir Con. A day.

Sir Otto. A week.

Sir Con. A month.

Sir Otto. A year.

Cath. [To SIR RUPERT.] Will you not make a guess?

Sir Rup. [Sighing.] It is a life!

Cath. Can't you go further, sir?

Try if you can. Lovers do miracles:

'Tis said they do, I never saw them, though,

Nor met with those that did.

Sir Otto. Where is our mistress?

Cath. Here,

Where'er she is; or nowhere, where you are.

Have you a mistress, there your mistress is,

Were she at one end of the world and you

At the other.

Sir Rup. Ay, were she in another world!

Cath. Why what's the matter with Sir Rupert? Is

The gentleman gone mad? I think myself

A sterling lover, but I take no oath,

Except to flesh and blood. Sir Rupert, what's

Your thought of a mistress?

Sir Rup. A vitality

Precious, peculiar, not to be supplied;

Once with your being join'd, a part of it

For ever!

Cath. Humph! and you believe, Sir Rupert,

You have met with such a thing?

Sir Rup. I have.

Cath. And where?

Sir Rup. In Catherine.

Cath. Heaven help the man, he speaks

As if he thought himself in earnest, sirs.

Whom said he now he'd break a lance for?

Sir Con. and Sir Otto. Her.

Cath. For Catherine? poor man! Far better break

A lance for the Countess; as the lists, they say,

Are open to all challengers, that bear

The rank of knighthood.

Sir Otto. So they are, and we

Design to try our fortune, and lament

To find Sir Rupert not of the same mind.

Cath. That mortifies you, does it? So, Sir Rupert,
Will you make suit again to Catherine,
Say she comes back again, released from her
Enforcéd vow?

Sir Rup. Will I make suit to her?
My heart is ever lying at her feet.

Cath. 'Tis neighbour, then, to an ungainly shoe.
She has broken her ankle, and the awkward leech
Who set it for her made a botch of it.
Her foot's awry; she limps; her taper waist,
So straight, before, when she moved, goes, zig-zag, now.
Give your heart joy, sir, of its pleasant seat.

Sir Rup. The gait and shape of gentle Catherine
Are in her heart, no fracture—warping—there!

Sir Otto. With what a serious face you play the cheat.

Cath. Sir, I look serious at a serious thing.

Sir Con. It is not as you say?

Cath. Believe 'tis not;

But take this with you, I should be more grieved
Than you would, to disparage Catherine.

Sir Otto. So the fair Catherine halts?

Sir Con. Halts my love.

Sir Otto. And so does mine.

Cath. I have not told him all.

Sir Otto. What, is there more to come?

Cath. Listen—you'll hear.

So, sir, you make retainers of your eyes, . [To SIR RUPERT.
Nor feast at the same table, but eschew
Their homely fare; though men, as noble, deem
A well-turn'd leg a dainty! Let that pass;
But give not me a mistress, with a fair
Transparent skin, that you can see, beneath,
Tracery costlier than veins of gold,
Suppose they lay in bed of alabaster.
It never stands the weather.

Sir Otto. Is she changed
In her complexion?

Cath. Do not urge me, sir,
To speak more than I would speak; speaking that
With pain.

Sir Con. What!—Has she turn'd from ivory to—

Cath. Anything that you please.

Sir Con. Mahogany?

Cath. You say it for me, I'm beholden to you;
'Tis hard to speak unwelcome things of friends.

Sir Otto. And hard to hear them too. Sir Rupert!

Sir Rup. Well?

Sir Otto. Hear ye?

Sir Rup. I do.

Sir Otto. And what resolve you?

Sir Rup. What
You heard me say before—to break no lance

Except for Catherine. Her maiden thoughts —
Sweet to the most tenacious mood of love —
And generous affections, might unveil
Themselves, without a blush, to modesty,
Are Catherine's complexion!

[Retires.]

Cath. He is mad!

Isn't he, sir? Have twenty masses said,
That you preserve your wits! seeing the thing,
That turn'd his brain for him, you all affect;
Think you 'twould bring him to his senses, sirs,
To tell him she hath squander'd all her wealth?

Sir Otto. Better she halted in her gait than that!

Sir Con. Or cast her white skin for an Ethiop's!

You do not tell us so?

Cath. I'll tell it him.

Sir Otto. But is it so?

She was a prudent girl
Before she went.

Cath. Man, sir, is but a plant,
Although he holds no rank in botany;
And, as with change of climate, plants will change,
Thrive more or less, or take no root at all;
So man discovers strange diversity,
Transferr'd to sun and soil, not native to him.

Sir Otto. But are her riches dwindled?

Sir Con. Has she shrunk,
Indeed, from affluence to poverty?

Cath. Sirs, you shall judge from one particular.
From morn till night she lives in masquerade.
You wouldn't know her, though you look'd upon her,
Walk'd with her, talk'd with her. Can this be done
At light expense? Moreover, sirs, she keeps
Bad company; nor that of her own sex;
Two arrant knaves especially, that stick
Like leeches to her, and will ne'er fall off
Long as she suffers them, while there's a drop
To gorge.

Sir Otto. She is ruin'd utterly.

Sir Con. Undone,
Beyond redemption. Look, Sir Rupert.

Sir Rup. Well?

Sir Con. Catherine's for hire; she must take service! All
Her wealth is gone!

Sir Rup. [cheerfully]. Is gone?

Sir Con. It makes you glad!

Sir Rup. Now could I woo her with the best of ye;
Her match in fortune. I could praise her now,
Dreading no charge of venal flattery.
Fair sir, take pity on an honest heart
And loving one, and as you know the haunt,
This gentle fawn hath slunk to, tell it me,
That I may trace her, straight, and make her mine.

Sir Otto. Better you wait to-morrow's tournament,
As we shall!

Cath. Gentlemen, you do not know
Your man! Tell me a linsey-woolsey maid,
With halting gait, and saffron-colour'd skin,
And not a doit to make a market with them,
Could for a moment, in comparison,
Stand with the Countess! Who could credit it?
The simple truth is this, your friend lacks mettle.

Sir Rup. Sir!

Cath. He can bluster, that is evident.
See what a giant!—He would eat me up
If he could! but think you, sirs, I heed his club?
Give me a straw, I'll face him. You mistake
Your friend! his frame's robust enough, but, sooth,
His spirit is a lank one.

Sir Rup. 'Sdeath, sir!

Cath. Ho!

If you have sworn men into agues, sir,
Don't try your skill on me! My parrot swears
As well as you, and just as much I heed her.

Sir Rup. [*Drawing.*] This passes all endurance—pshaw, a
stripling! [*Returning his sword.*]

Cath. A stripling, sir, to make an oak afear'd.

Sir Rup. [*Again drawing.*] Indeed!

Cath. As I live, his sword is out again!
But he's a spaniel, as I'll prove to you,
Who thinks he bites by showing you his teeth.
Here's for you, sir—[*Draws*—but hold, what day is this?

Sir Con. Friday.

Cath. I never fight on Fridays, sirs.
My killing days are all the rest of the week,
E'en Sundays not excepted. Sirs, your friend
Is a coward. [*Coolly puts up her sword.*]

Sir Rup. Furies!

Cath. Fiends and all sorts of imps!
Swearing won't save you, sir. I'll prove my words.
I dare you, at the tournament to-morrow,
To break a lance with me. Observe you, sirs,
At the thought of it, he shakes, from head to foot,
And thinks to pass it off with swaggering.
He dares as soon confront stout Charlemagne,
Were he alive, as me. I'll wager you
My sword to your dagger, he takes flight to-day,
And waits not for to-morrow.

Sir Rup. Will I not!

I will have satisfaction. I accept
His challenge. I will have satisfaction, sirs.

Cath. You shall, and have it to your heart's content!
Take linsey-woolsey with a halt, and the skin
Of a negro, rather than essay a tilt
With chance to win a Countess! I could laugh

To scorn the man that would believe him. Oh!
 He shall have satisfaction. I could beat him
 With a rush, in rest. He shall have satisfaction!
 Sirs, he will cower at very sight of me;
 Fall on his knees, and beg his life of me,
 With clasp'd hands. He shall have satisfaction!
[They go out severally.]

SCENE IV.—*A Room in the Castle.*

Enter COUNTESS.

Count. All is confirm'd—Each gives the same account
 His mistress sees her mate. Of all her court
 He is the only one, whose duties to her
 She takes as favours, not as things of course.
 He comes! Who stops him thus untimely? Oh,
 How changed he is!—The fiery hardihood
 Of the life he hath of late made consort of,
 Has given another spirit to his eyes.
 His face is cast anew, as circumstance
 Could alter Nature's modelling and work,
 Improving, on her mould. Is that the man,
 Was, once, my father's serf? whom once I scorn'd?
 Fell ever at my wayward frown that brow?
 Or stoop'd that knee, for me, to kiss the ground?
 Would it do it now? Fell ever at my feet
 That form, as prostrate as the hand of death
 Had struck it to the floor? 'Twould take that hand
 To lay it, now, there—and a wave of mine
 Had done it, once! If he confesses hold
 Of any other, never shall he learn
 His hold of me! If he bears me love,
 I bless my stars I have the 'vantage-ground.

HUON *enters, and remains standing at a distance, with his eyes on the ground.*

Countess. Is Huon here, and does not Huon speak? [*Pauses.*
 Absent so long, no greeting for a friend— [*Pauses.*
 A woman, too! [*Pauses*—No salutation, kind,
 Prelude of happy news she'd joy to hear,—
 Relation of adventures she would thrill
 To listen to,—exploits she would wonder at,
 And the next moment at her wonder blush,
 Knowing whose arm achieved them!

Huon. I am glad
 To find you well.

Countess. You are glad to find me well?
 I hope you are! It were not saying much,
 I trust, to say I *know* you are! You are glad
 To find me well! Is that your news?

If 'tis, 'tis very strange.

Huon. You wish'd to see me,
And I am here to learn your will.

Countess. More news!

You are a friend worth parting with, you bring
Such marvels home with you. Some time methinks
Since last we met together, and *you are glad*
To find me well; and, *as I wish'd to see you,*
You are here to learn my will! You were not here, then,
Had not I sent for you.

Huon. It would have been
Presumptuous.

Countess. Presumptuous!

Huon. Yes, madam,
In the serf.

Countess. [*With sudden indignation.*] No, sir, not in the
favourite

Of the Empress!—*Huon*, this is not the way
We ought to meet! It should not be in anger!
You are come home, and you are welcome home.
Requires my tongue a backer to get credence?
Well! there's my hand beside. Do you not take
My hand?

Huon. You are a noble lady, madam,
Whose father was my lord, by leave of whom,
I thought and had a will—did what I did—
Yea, kept the very blood within my veins.
Behoves it I should take his daughter's hand?

Countess. You mock me!

Huon. Would I did, and 'twere a dream!
But dreams are not repeated, day by day,
And day by day reminds me of a time
I was your father's serf.

Countess. No more of this.

Huon. Oh! would no more! The wounded body heals,
The pain is over, all is sound again,
A scar reminds you of it—nothing more!
Not so the heart, you lacerate it once!
Habit may dull, pursuit engross—divert—
But never are you ransom'd from the throe!
Live your meridian out, it comes again,
Fresh as at first, to make you writhe anew.

Countess. We do not meet to talk of grievances,

Huon. I offer'd you my hand just now.
Why do you weep? I did not give it you
To kiss it with your tears!

Huon. O, 'tis a hand
Thou hast forbidden mine to meet.

Countess. No, *Huon*,
Not as a friend's!—[*Recovering herself.*]—I'll see him clearly
first— [*Aside.*]
Sit down and let us talk. I have fifty things

I want to say to you, yet know not which
To begin with. Huon, do you like the Empress?

Huon. Like her?

Countess. Yes; like her,—that's the word I said.
Perhaps it should be "love her?"

Huon. Love her, madam!—

Countess. [*Interrupting him.*] I see you do! Go on? What
were you going

To say?

Huon. O contrast marvellous! beyond
Belief of nature!

Countess. Ay! 'twixt her and me!

Go on! The contrast? Best we understand
Each other! Well? The contrast?

Huon. 'Twere as one

Should find the sun by following the night!
Should plunge into her regions, and for chill,
And gloom, and sterileness, find light, and warmth,
And verdure,—such as should belong to day!
'Twere as death own'd a heart, and life had none
But with the shows of animation
Harbour'd, within its breast, a core of stone,
While the still ribs of death held throbs beneath them!

Countess. Am I that day, that life, compared to which
Death, night, are e'en so rich? Is she thou servest
That death, that night, preferr'd to life and day?

Huon. O, I *did* love thee to oblivion
Of myself! What Nature gave me, to assert
The man, neglecting, as despiséd things
Compared to thee! That she intended me
For deeds of nobleness, I may confess,
Seeing that others own I have achieved them;
Yet I abused her bounties,—and, for what?
Scorns—wrongs—through love of thee, preferr'd them!
And which I bore, until the cause itself,
That made me bear them, thou wouldst make a means
Of yet unknown oppression. *That I bore!*
But, patience there gave up! Yes!—Not, until
Coercéd there—where, spared, I were content
To last the thrall of passion's lethargy—
Did I rebel! But when I was struck down
Prostrate, as, for the sake of flesh and blood,
Behoves not slave to lie,—with marvel on't
I waked to the sense of what I ought to be!
Of what, against my will, 'twas past the sport
Of power to change me from! A MAN!—and straight
A man I started up! a man, resolved
To use his attributes as fits a man;
To vindicate the ancient, common birth-right,
And answer the design of Him that framed him!

Countess. So! You have *register'd* your debts to me,
No item overlook'd thou knowest of,

What, now, if I could name to thee one debt
 Would blot out all the rest?—*not* known to thee;
 A debt thy fairest dreams ne'er gave thee glimpse of,
 Howe'er they buoy'd thee up; when, cast away
 The clog that day put on, thou soar'dst as high
 As e'er ambition left at large could wing,
 Daring the eagle himself to follow thee!

Huon. No debt that thou couldst name were gain to me.
 I keep no register of aught between us.

Or, if I do, I never turn'd to it,
 Unless enforced, as now. Whate'er has pass'd,
 Is pass'd, and, profitless to memory,
 Were better be forgotten.

Countess. Ay? Indeed!
 So easily done? Well, be it so! 'Tis past,
 And, so, should be forgotten. Please you now
 Turn to the Empress. You have painted me;
 Proceed to her. Come, let me see what hand
 You will make of her picture. When I ask'd you now
 If you liked her, you but echo'd me!—and then
 I ask'd you if you loved her, and again
 You echo'd me! I want an answer, not
 An echo! Well, sir? well?

Huon. Madam, I love
 And honour her. [*She starts from her seat; he rises also.*]

Countess. Thou art rewarded, pride!—
 Meet'st thy deserts! Show thy high breeding now!
 Tread stately! throw thy spurning glances round!
 And talk as mighty things as though the earth
 Were made for thee alone! Where's thy domain?
 Gone! And thy palace, what is it? a ruin!
 And what art thou thyself? a beggar now!

Huon, you loved me once! [*Bursting into tears.*]

Huon. I loved thee once!
 Oh, tell me, when it was I loved thee not?
 Was't in my childhood, boyhood, manhood? Oh!
 In all of them I loved thee? And were I now
 To live the span of my past life, twice told,
 And then to wither, thou surviving me,
 And yet I lived in thy sweet memory,
 Then mightst thou say of me, "He loved me once;
 But that was all his life!"

Countess. 'Twas heart for heart!
 I loved thee ever! Yes! the love that now
 Thrills on the woman's tongue; the girl's had told thee,
 Had I been bold as fond; for, even then,
 I saw thy worth; but did not see thy station,
 Till others, not so well affected towards thee,
 Reveal'd it to me by their cold regards.
 I could not help my nature. From that time
 Two passions strove in my divided soul
 For mastery—scorn of thy station—love

For thee—each feeding on the other's hate,
 And growing stronger, till I thought their strife
 Would shake my frame to dissolution! Yes!
 O, Huon! when my brow sat cloudy, oft,
 O'er my cold eye, that look'd askant at thee,
 Thou little thought'st what friend there was within
 Would make that brow clear as a summer sky,
 That eye bright, glowing as a summer's sun,
 To kindle thee—as they, their world, with life,
 And health, and wealth, and gladness!

Huon. Say'st thou this
 To me? or do I dream I hear thee say it?
 Or is the past a dream? I did not yield
 At thy command, to marry Catherine?
 Thou didst not see me wed her? Fancy forged
 The ring I thought I put upon her finger?
 Thou wast not by at all? From first to last,
 Hadst not a hand in it? or, if thou hadst,
 Why, then, untimely this unfold to me?
 For well I know thee to be prime of all
 Proud honour's children! Art thou offspring prime
 Of cruelty as well? O, Heaven, to think
 She loved me, and could give me to another,
 Nor yet to her alone!—another!—

Countess. Ha! Well?

Huon. One who ne'er set eyes on me, until
 An outcast, by *her* deed of hate, who loved me!
 Saw me, a stranger, hunting after fortune,
 And gave her hand to me could help me up!
 Lavish'd her favours on me!—decorates
 With honours, till beside the bright themselves
 I lost no brightness!

Countess. To the Empress?

Huon. Yes!
 Thou lovest me?—O, fate! There was a time,
 'Twere more than bliss, if more could be, to know it;
 But now 'tis misery!

Countess. 'Tis misery!

[*COUNTRESS starts up again; HUON also rising.*]

Art thou in such a strait indeed as that,
 To give my love for thee so harsh a name?
 What shall I call it then? Coin me a name
 Will stand for something worse than misery—
 Will paint the case of a high, noble maid,
 Who stoop'd to love a serf; nay, stoop'd not there,
 But told her passion to him—Misery!

Huon. I am no more a serf.

Countess. Thou art ennobled;
 Yet art thou still the same; thou hast won honours,
 Rewards of deeds, in spite of thy base blood
 Achieved by thee!

Huon. Nay, madam, spare my blood,

And pardon me, its owner, if I say
It is not base.

Countess. It is!—What should it be
But base? A serf gave it to thee, a serf
Gave him his blood! •Trace back the current, sir,
Far as you can, and you will find it base,
Nothing but base!

Huon. Madam, men's natures are
Their blood; they have no other—high or low.
If base the current hitherto of mine,
It ceased with me. Born in thy father's house
A serf, I left it one, to seek my fortune,
Make it or mar it, for promotion having
No other patron than my own right arm,
And my own heart and head to guide and nerve it;
And with their help, I sec that house again,
An independent, self-exalted man,
While many a son, who left a noble home
With blood untainted for a thousand years,
Returns to it no better than he left it.
Is my blood base?

Countess. No, Huon! mine was base
To let me call it so. Alas! alas!
And hast no better welcome for my love
Than that sad word thou spok'st?

Huon. What word so fit?
What is it to a man condemn'd to die,
To tell him of a treasure left to him?
Shall he be glad and thank his lucky stars,
Or shall not that, their bounty, aggravate
The ruin, makes it vain!

Countess. Condemn'd to die?
Resemblest thou a man condemn'd to die?

Huon. Why didst thou drive me from thee by that act?

Countess. That act was nothing; 'twas thy flight,
And that which follow'd it. Thou art entangled—
And thank thy flight. Oh! Huon, were thy love
In daring enterprise the tithe of mine,
'Twould attempt something to enlarge thee from
The cause thou art prisoner to!

Huon. It cannot cease,
Except with life.

Countess. The Empress loves thee, Huon!

Huon. No.

Countess. But she does.
Thou art her favourite. She
Hath chain'd thee to her throne.

Huon. No.

Countess. But she has!
Thou hast made merchandise,
Most shameful merchandise, of thy allegiance!

Broken oaths as tiny shells, which at a touch,
Will fall to powder!

Huon. Broken oaths!

Countess. Yes, oaths!

Thy life was all one oath of love to me!
Sworn to me daily, hourly, by thine eyes,
Which, when they saw me, lighten'd up, as though
An angel's presence had enhanced their vision,
That I have seen their very colour change,
Subliming into hues past earthliness.

Talk of the adjuration of the tongue—

Compare love's name, a sound which any lip
May pipe! a breath!—with holy love itself!
Thou'rt not forsworn, because thou took'st no oath?

What were thy accents then? thy accents, *Huon*?

Language that turn'd thy lightest words to oaths,

Vouching the burden of a love-fraught soul!

Telling a tale which my young nature caught

With interest so deep, 'twas conn'd by heart

Before I knew the fatal argument!

Huon, I charge thee quit the service of

The Empress!

Huon. 'Twere against all honour.

Countess. No!

Give up her service!

Huon. 'Twere ingratitude.

Countess. Ingratitude for what!

Huon. She has advanced me

Past my deserts.

Countess. No, I deny it! No!

Not equal to them! No! Thy golden deeds

She has repaid with tinsel!

Ulrick. [*Entering.*] Please you, sir,
The Empress summons you.

Countess. You are not going?

Huon. My presence is commanded.

Countess. Are you going?

Ulrick. My lord!

Huon. I come.

Countess. You are going, then?

Huon. I must go.

Countess. You must? Then go! Go, and farewell for ever!

They go out.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Hall of the Castle.*

The EMPRESS, Courtiers, Knights, Herald, &c., prepared to proceed to the Tournament.

Enter ULRICK.

Emp. [*To ULRICK.*] Why wait we for the Countess? What delays her?

This day is dedicate to her; for her

We are convened; and comes she last of all?

Ulrick. Madam, she craves your favour for this pause.

Believe 'tis not remissness, but mischance,

Retards her. Doubtless she will come, anon.

Emp. Anon, my lord! Anon is not our time

For friends to greet us, when they summon us.

[Enter three Attendants, the first bearing a coronet on a cushion, the second a pile of parchments, the third followed by Vassals, carrying money-coffers; last of all, the COUNTESS, plainly attired, followed by her Women, in costly dresses. She stops before the EMPRESS.]

Emp. Why, lady! what is this?

Countess. My liege, receive
This emblem of that pomp which I resign,
Because 'tis adjunct to conditions, such
As render it a burden to me, past
The faculty of sufferance to bear.

Emp. Lady!

Countess. So please you, madam, give me leave,
As joint executor with this worthy lord,
Into your hands I also yield all right
And title to this fair château, besides
The lands and forests, its appendages,
As well as vassals, natives of the soil.

Emp. But, lady—

Countess. Madam, suffer me conclude.
These are the coffers which my father left,
And, as he left them, render'd to your highness;
And with them all resign'd, save such endowment
As shall entitle me to that retreat,
Holy and calm, wherein I mean to pass,
I'll say, the remnant of my days, i' th' hope,
Though few are past, still fewer are to come—
Which option, as you know, my father's will
Has left to me.

Emp. Then will you not abide
The cast of fate in the tournament? nor take
The husband she may send—nor yet select
Yourself?

Countess. I cannot, madam.

Emp. How?

Countess. I am
Forestall'd.

Emp. By whom?

Countess. By you!

Emp. Let every one

Repair to the tournament. Let it proceed,
As we ourself were there. And you, my lord, [To ULRICK.
Preside for us. It is our will the lists
Be open'd straight. The Countess stays with me.

[All go out, except the EMPRESS and COUNTESS.

We are alone! Now, how am I a let
To such espousals as your choice would make?

Countess. Do you not know?

Emp. Girl, be direct with me;

Nor in the headlong passion of your soul,
That seems to joy in strife and wrack, forget
'Tis your liege lady that vouchsafes you audience!

Countess. That I forget, and everything beside,
Except one thing, in still revolving which,
The earth hath shrunk in estimation
Into a grain—the sun into a spark!
Nought hath kept substance but my desolation,
Which seems to me to fill up space, itself,
Till nothing else hath room.

Emp. Thy desolation? Who made it for thee?

Countess. Thou!

Emp. In what regard?

Countess. In thy attractive favour shown to Huon!

Emp. I made thy desolation? Thou thyself
Didst make it with thy pride, the greater, but
Worse portion of thee!

Countess. By my pride?

Emp. Thy pride!

Which, evil counsellor to thy love, advised it
To blush with shame at homage, from the which
It could not yet refrain, because 'twas due—
Tribute to such desert, as far behind
Left all desert beside, and might have won
The subject's heart—whose mistress's it won!—
Thy story—everything are known to me.

Countess. Then thou confessest it!

Emp. What?

Countess. What?

Emp. Beware!

I brook not such a tone from thee.

Countess. The heart

Will speak, despite the checks of shows and forms,
Shadows compared to its realities!
Is it not so with thee?—e'er hast thou felt
A pang?—and if thou hast, where, then, thy palace?

Thy retinue?—thy guards?—thy empire?—Gone,
 With all their proud appurtenances, and
 No habitation left thee, but thy breast,
 The only house of happiness or woe!
 How shall it be with me then, with a heart,
 Madden'd with torture? Shall I cast about
 To furnish looks, and words, and tones for things,
 I have no interest in, and thou, that hast,
 In equal case wouldst give to disregard?

Emp. Remember thou'rt a subject!

Countess. So I will

While thou'rt the empress; but when thou becomest
 A woman—a mere woman like myself—
 Stepp'st from the eminence that lifts thee 'bove me—
 Levell'st thee to me in one common nature—
 I deal with thee as woman deals with woman!
 I own thy power! I must and do! Thy breath
 Can doom me exile, bondage, what it will!
 There I submit! Thou art the empress there.
 But when thou thwart'st me in the interests
 Which are the right, not more of one than all—
 Trenchest upon my private peace—my love—
 Thou dost me wrong for which I challenge thee,
 As equal may an equal.

Emp. Come! Thy challenge?

What dost allege against me?

Countess. That thou lov'st him!

Emp. Ay, by my troth, as much as thou didst scorn him!

Countess. Was't he accused me to thee?

Emp. Wayward woman,

He never spoke of thee except with love.

Countess. How couldst thou love him then? How could
 thy greatness

Forget itself to try and steal a heart,
 Thou knew'st to be another's?

Emp. Steal!

Countess. Ay, steal!

Must we coin terms for those that are above us,
 To make offences gracious to their ears,
 When they commit them—which, by us enacted,
 They would blast with damning names!

Emp. Thou hast a spirit!

Countess. Thou knew'st he loved me, and didst covet
 him!

Covet a heart at second-hand—an empress!
 Hear me that am a subject, and thy subject—
 His heart was mine, until thou robb'dst me of it—
 Not of it all, but of a part—though if
 A part be gone, go all!—Well, as I said,
 His heart was mine at first. 'Tis gone—My peace,
 Hopes, everything, along with it! What then?
 Would I have it back?—No!—I would sooner die!

Its worth was its fidelity—That lost,
All's lost. Thou covetedst a faithless heart!

Emp. Didst thou deserve that heart?

Countess. [*Weeping.*] I did!—I loved him
Better than thou couldst do!

Emp. I' faith, thou'rt brave!
Thy love of him was persecution.

Countess. [*Weeping.*] Yet
I loved him!

Emp. Loved him! It was tyranny,
Enforced without the mercy of a pause.

Countess. [*Weeping still, and more bitterly.*] The more I
loved him!

Emp. Loved him!—and constrained him
To nuptials he abhorr'd.

Countess. I did—and then [*In an agony of tears.*]
I loved him most!

Emp. How had it fared with him,
Hadst thou been I?

Countess. Far differently.

Emp. How?

Countess. I then had been above rebuke or blame!
I would have given his merits their fair field,
Encouraged them to challenge their deserts,
Rewarded them till they had lifted him
So near equality to me, the seat
I fill'd, he might have shared along with me.

Emp. That field he found himself, without my aid!
I saw him there, and challenged simple greatness,
In spite of its disguise; desired it doff
Its lowly suit and show the thing it was;
Nor stopp'd till, step by step, I saw it climb
To where it stands; nor mean I to stop there!

Countess. How?

Emp. I design him for the highest grace
I can bestow.

Countess. The highest!

Emp. Yes, beyond
His hopes, until to-day—Until to-day,
Never divulged to him.

Countess. He knows it, then?

Emp. He does; and, till my promise is fulfill'd,
With fears that shake him, spite of certainty
Of his immeasurable happiness—
For such he thinks it—wears a doubtful life.

Countess. Thy hand!

Emp. The hand of her, more proud to be
The empress of his heart than of my realm.

Countess. He shall not take it!

Emp. Not?

Countess. Thy power is huge,
But there are bounds to it!

Emp. What bounds?

Countess. Right!—Law!—

Imperial foot stops there.—It dares not cross,
And if it dares, it shall not!

Emp. Sooth, thou'rt brave!

Countess. He shall not marry!

Emp. No?

Countess. No!

Emp. She's a rock!

She echoes me!

Countess. He shall not marry!

Emp. What!

Again?

Countess. Wast thou the empress of the world,
I'd say to thee again—He shall not marry!

Emp. Thou know'st a let?

Countess. I do!

Emp. The troth he pledged

To Catherine—you see I am advised
Of all! 'The marriage is annull'd.

Countess. It is?

Emp. It is!

Countess. How?

Emp. By the Church!

Countess. The Church? And yet

He shall not marry!

Emp. What! Not marry thee?

Countess. [*Changing, and falling on her knees.*] Madam!

Emp. The hand that I design for him—

Crown of my favour, his deserts—is thine,
Not mine, my girl—the guerdon fair for which
He would not take my empire in exchange—
Ay, with my hand, to boot!

Countess. My liege, my empress!

Emp. My fiery queen, and have I tamed you now?
Tamed you, so soon! I half repent me on't.

Mine's the true spirit, namesake! It admires

To see itself in others. 'Faith, my glass

Never reflected me more honestly

Than thou didst, even now. Listen to me.

I am thy Huon's friend, and nothing more.

Rise! Now we'll talk as sister does with sister.

Hither thy Huon bears me company—

Unwarn'd to what intent, until to-day.

Until to-day, in darkness that the bar

The Church, with thy fair aid, 'twixt him and thee

Had set—the Church, at my persisting suit,

Has quite annull'd; and now he's in the lists

Striving to win thee! He that never yet,

In strait of life or death, much less a tilt,

Suffer'd defeat! [*Trumpets.*]—That flourish is the close.

Smile at it, girl! It makes thee Huon's wife!

Huon—no more the serf—but nobleman—
Nor nobleman alone! This hour a prince,
For thy fair sake!

Countess [*dejectedly to herself*]. Would he were still the
serf.

Emp. Dejected, girl!

Countess. Madam.

Emp. They come! Come hither!

Here take thy seat in the centre. Here thou art chief.

We are but second! Smile—Thy Huon comes!

[*Music.* *ULRICK and the rest re-enter from the
Tournament. The EMPRESS anxiously surveys them.
The COUNTESS absent and dejected.*

Where is he?

Countess. Madam?

Emp. Which is Huon?

[*Aside to COUNTESS.*

Countess. Which?

Emp. [*Aside to COUNTESS.*] Methinks he is not here. Canst
make him out?

Girl, tell me, is thy lover here or not?

He seems not here, and yet he must be here.

Herald. Madam, the lists are closed. The victor waits
The prize which he has won. Shall he receive it?

Emp. [*Aside to COUNTESS.*] Shall I say yes? I must say
yes. Thou smilest.

I will say yes!—He shall receive the prize.

[*Aloud.*

Who is he that bows?

Herald. The victor, madam.

Emp. [*To COUNTESS.*] Ha!

Do you know him?

Countess. Not with his visor; yet

Methinks I ought to know him, were it he.

Emp. Sir Knight, so please you, raise your visor. 'Tis

The prince of Milan! Girl—what means thine eye—

To blaze with joy? It looks on thy despair!

The prince of Milan 'tis that wins thy hand!

Hear'st thou me? Know'st thou what I say?

Countess. I do!

Both hear and comprehend thee.

Emp. Ay, and smile?

Countess. And smile.

Emp. Art thou thyself? Am I myself?

I think myself the same! Where is Huon?

Ulrick. Gone

To take his armour off.

Emp. How fared it with him?

Ulrick. He enter'd first the lists, and one by one
O'erthrew all comers, till the prince of Milan

Unhorsed him.

Countess. Is he hurt?

Ulrick. No, madam.

Countess. [*Starting up.*] Thanks!
My Lord, bring Huon hither! Hither! Hie!
Now all is as it should be.

Emp. Should be, girl?
Say rather should not be. Thy lover's foil'd.
Where is the ashy cheek, that meets disaster,
The brow that's like the wrack? the gusty breath?
The quivering bloodless lip and quaking frame?
These should be, and they are not! Where are they?
Or rather, wherefore see I in their stead
Things 'twould become to wait on holidays
Rather than days of penance? Look not thus,
Else thou wilt make me hate thee!

Countess. Madam, madam,
I tell thee, and believe me, all is well.

Emp. [*Indignantly.*] Then let the prince of Milan take his prize.

Fred. I claim it on my knee!

[*At the moment the Prince kneels, HUON led by ULRICK enters, and the COUNTESS rushes towards him.*]

Countess. How is it, Huon?
Thou look'st as hurt.

Huon. Sped in the spirit, lady.
Forgetful of my charger, all unmindful,
He lack'd my argument to hearten him,
Bent on the most surpassing prize alone,
I did not think to change him, and he fail'd me!

Countess. Fortune, farewell! and pride go with thee! Go!
Welcome adversity! Shake hands with me,
Thou tester of true hearts! whose homely fare
No flatterer sits down to—hollow friend—
Foe, masking thoughts of scorn with smiling face;—
But truth and honesty! affection stanch!
That grasps the hand before it scans the sleeve,
And greets the lowly portal with a grace
More winning far than his, who thanks the gate
That spreads with pride, to let a monarch in.

Emp. Girl, I am loath to speak in terms of blame,
But thou hast much offended courtesy:
Not only slighting me, thy sov'reign lady,
But him to whom thy fate awards thee bride.

Countess. A wife must be a widow, ere a bride.

Emp. A wife?—No wife art thou!

Countess. I am a wife!
Before this goodly presence I proclaim it.
A wife by stealth, but still a wedded wife!
Wedded for love, as fervent, durable,
As ever led a woman to the altar!

Emp. Where is thy husband? Hear'st thou—where is he?

Countess. Where my remorse, contrition, deprecation,
Homage, and love, now throw me! I am kneeling
At his feet!

[*Kneels to HUON*]

Huon. Thy husband, I ?

Countess. My husband, thou !

Huon. Was I not wed to Catherine ?

Countess. Thou wast.

My name is Catherine, as thou shouldst know,

But, as thou knewest not, till now ; the lips

Pronounced that name in wedding thee—the hand

Then given to thee—the troth then plighted thee—

Were mine as truly as the breath that now

Avows I am thy wife !—in debt to fate

For baffling thee ; for now she owns thee lord

In thy adversity !

Huon. Thou kneel'st to me !

In mawel of thy words !—I overlook'd thee,

Madam !—My wife, rise—pray you, rise !—my own,

My dear liege lady ever ! I am feeble

In words ; but oh ! the strife is strong, within,

Of wonder, gratitude, humility,

Pride, honour, love, outdoing one another !

Enter CATHERINE, disguised.

Cath. Fair Empress, justice ! justice !

Emp. What comes now ?

Who asks for justice ?

Cath. One that is most wrong'd

In his honour ; cheated by a craven knight,

Who promised him to give him meeting here ;

But hath broken his word—no doubt, through cowardice.

Emp. What is his name ?

Cath. Sir Rupert.

Sir Rup. [*Stepping forward.*] He speaks false !

I am here to my appointment.

Cath. Are you so ?

Have you not sprain'd your arm ?

Sir Rup. No !

Cath. Nor your leg ?

Sir Rup. No !

Cath. Nor your side, that you can't sit your horse ?

Sir Rup. No !

Cath. Wonderful ! Your spirit does not fail ?

Sir Rup. No !

Cath. Yet more wonderful, you'll fight me ?

Sir Rup. Yes !

Cath. You shall, but where I pray you are your friends ?

Sir Otto and Sir Conrad. [*Coming forward.*] Here !

Cath. Gentlemen, I am sorry for the fall

You got in tilting for the Countess ; but

'Tis nothing to the one which he shall rue,

As you shall see. Down on your knees and beg

Your life.

Sir Rup. And beg my life !

Cath. Now what's the use

Of pondering, on that which must be done?
 Do I not know, sir, that you have borne cuffs
 A thousand times, as well you know you have,
 And know you not, a bold face never yet
 Made a bold heart? Down on your knees at once!
 Valour won't come for stamping, sir! Entreat
 Your friends to hold you; that's a better way
 To pass for a brave man.

Sir Rup. I'll smite thee.

Cath. Do!

If you dare! [Throwing off cloak.
 Ha! Have I brought you to thy knee at last, sir?
 Said I not truly, that I would bring you there?
 Beware I say not I shall keep you there!

Sir Rup. What! Catherine?

Countess. Yes, Catherine, Sir Rupert.

Sir Rup. O happiness!

Countess. Which thou hast well deserved.

Sir Rup. Thou still wast gracious to me.

Countess. For thy truth,

Attested by thy jealous poverty.

I saw thy honest love for Catherine,
 In secret cherish'd, as thou thought'st—as one
 Conceals a costly treasure he has found,
 And rightfully may keep, but, being poor,
 Fear to display it, through the world's charity.
 Thy Catherine, whom before thou fear'dst to woo,
 Now dares make suit to thee, and challenges thee,
 To make her thine. So, take her, if thou wilt,
 And with her honour, for thy honest love!

Cath. O—

Countess. Huon, my husband—Lord! canst thou forgive
 The scornful maid, for the devoted wife,
 Had cleaved to thee, though ne'er she own'd thee lord?

Huon. I nothing see, except thy wondrous love.

Countess. Madam, our happiness lifts up to thee
 Its eyes in penitence and gratitude!
 Thou, chief in station, first to give desert,
 Despite its lowliness, its lofty due!
 O, thou hast taught a lesson to all greatness,
 Whether of rank or wealth, that 'tis the roof
 Stately and broad which ne'er was meant to house
 Equality alone—whose porch is never
 So proud, as when it welcomes in desert,
 That comes in its own fair simplicity.

END OF LOVE.

JOHN OF PROCI DA;

OR,

The Bridals of Messina.

A TRAGEDY.—IN FIVE ACTS.

TO CAPTAIN CHARLES H. TOWNLEY, R.N.

4, GREAT GEORGE'S SQUARE, LIVERPOOL.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have the greatest pride and pleasure in now redeeming an old promise—that of dedicating A PLAY of mine to you.

Whether as a gallant naval officer, an accomplished seaman, or an amiable private citizen, I do not know the man who ought to supersede you in receiving this humble heart-tribute from your affectionate and grateful servant,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

29, ALFRED PLACE, BEDFORD SQUARE.

September, 1840.

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN IN 1840.)

SICILIANS.

<i>Procidu</i>	Mr. MOORE.
<i>Fernando</i>	Mr. ANDERSON.
<i>Guiscardo</i>	Mr. COOPER.
<i>Martini</i>	Mr. W. H. PAYNE.
<i>Andrea</i>	Mr. HEMMING.
<i>Carlo</i>	Mr. BINGE.
<i>Stephano</i>	Mr. C. J. SMITH.
<i>Thomaso</i>	Mr. COLLETT.
<i>Francisco</i>	Mr. MORELLI.

FRENCH.

<i>Governor</i>	Mr. DIDDEAR.
<i>Martel</i>	Mr. BRINDAL.
<i>Louis</i>	Mr. FITZJAMES.
<i>Ambrose</i>	Mr. BLAND.
<i>Le Clerc</i>	Mr. WIGAN.
<i>François</i>	Mr. HONNER.
<i>Pierre</i>	Mr. CONNELL.
<i>Antonio</i>	Mr. S. SMITH.
<i>Eugene</i>	Mr. THOMPSON.
<i>Isoline</i>	Miss E. TREE.
<i>Marguerite</i>	Miss FITZJAMES.

JOHN OF PROCIDA;

OR,

The Bridals of Messina.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Pass in the Mountains near Messina.*

Enter GUISCARDO and STEPHANO.

Guis. His words were fire—both light and heat! At once
With zeal, they warm'd us; and convinced, with reason.
I had read and heard of eloquence before;
How 'tis despotic, takes the heart by storm—
Whate'er the ramparts, prejudice, or use
Environ it withal—how, 'fore its march,
Stony resolves have given way like flax,
How it can raise, or lay, the mighty surge
Of popular commotion, as the wind,
The wave that frets the sea;—but till to-day,
I never proved its power. When he began,
A thousand hearers prick'd their ears to list,
With each a different heart; when he left off,
Each man could tell his neighbour's by his own.

Steph. Is't John of Procida?

Guis. So rumour says.

Who else? The constant'st friend of Sicily—
The friend that loves, yet suffers for his love.
Heard'st ever lips before, with power like his?
A holy man, and brigand, near me stood,
Wedge'd by the press together; churlishly
They first endured their compell'd neighbourhood,
And shrank from contact, they would fain escape.
The one with terror; and with scorn, the other,
Who blazed with life and passion, like a torch
Beside a taper;—such the man of prayer
Appear'd, in contrast with the freebooter.
But lo! the change! soon as the orator
That universal chord, with master skill,
Essay'd—the love of country—Like two springs,
Ravines apart, whose waters blend at last
In some sweet valley; leaning cheek to cheek,

Attracted by resistless sympathy,
 Their tears together ran, one goodly river!
 Hark! the dispersing crowd, taking their leave
 From the last hill-tops. Let us join them. [*They cheer.*]

Steph. Hither
 Come Andrea and John of Procida.
 Let's on, my friend, nor interrupt their converse,
 For it seems deep, and earnest.

Guis. Have with you.
 I would Fernando had been here, that friend
 I scarce can boast, yet can't refrain from loving.
 If there be latent virtue in his blood,
 Like what endears the land that gives us birth,
 Such heart enforcement sure had call'd it forth! [*They go out.*]

Enter PROCIDA, disguised as a Cordelier, and ANDREA.

And. You move my wonder, past the speaking on't.
 I never dream'd, in such extremity,
 Such hope could be so near!

Pro. 'Tis in the crisis
 The fever does or dies. Our friends abroad
 Are warm, and not a few; the fleet, you see
 In the offing, and suppose the Pope's, is ours;
 At home, Sicilians are as one single man,
 Their thoughts, their feelings, their resolves, the same.
 In this disguise, each quarter of the isle
 Where man hath habitation, house, or cave,
 I have visited; and tuned the minds of all
 To the same temper and the selfsame aim,
 Vengeance and liberty! Before a week
 The hordes of France shall dwindle to the man
 Whose execution ends them.

And. Retribution
 Indeed!

Pro. Yes; sweeping and definitive.
 Thou seem'st to lower at it. Hast any part
 In France? Dost owe her kindliness or ruth?—
 The tyranny that Sicily weeps, daily,
 With blood!—her children's scourge, as testify
 Murder and rapine, that unblushingly
 Enact their parts in open day, and lust,
 With quite as little shame! I know that men
 Will turn to tigers in a storm'd town
 That's yielded them to sack; but Syracuse;
 Palermo, and Messina, stood no siege;
 And yet were they sack'd, and still the game goes on,
 And in cold blood! What weighs upon thy heart?
 Or what *can* weigh when thy dear native land
 Is nigh to throw her grievous burden off?

And. 'Twas not with heed for France my visage sell,
 But thee.

Pro. But me! For what?

And. Those who devote themselves
To virtuous causes, where bad men prevail,
And breed contamination, have at times
A hard and most ungracious part to play,
When those, they love, behoves they mark to suffer.

Pro. Whom do I mark to suffer, yet do love?
I have no kindred, have I? If I have,
It must be only in that far degree
Where distance genders strangeness.

And. Hadst thou not
A son?

Pro. Thou know'st I had! Thou know'st he's dead!
The infant perish'd in the sacking of
My castle.—So it was affirm'd by one
Who brought the horrid tale—Is he *alive*?

And. Be patient! You remember, do you not,
When he was four years old, or thereabouts—
You told me his age, for he was then a boy,
Might pass for six, and so I rated him,
He was so fine a child—you recollect
At e'en that tender age a hard excrescence,
And something like a wart, but larger, which
Like threatening mischief had begun to grow;
At thy request, I from his fore-arm cut.

'Twas rooted deep; as deep of course the wound,
And, answering to the knife, of crucial form!

Pro. I recollect it! Is the boy alive?

And. Listen! 'Twas here I cut it from his arm.
'Tis true another might have such a cause
For surgery in even such a place,
And such a scar the remedy might leave;
Though to my own hand I could safely swear.

Pro. Hast seen the mark on any one?

And. I pray you
Hear what I have to tell, then draw yourself
The inference.

Pro. O Heaven! I have a son,
And he's in jeopardy, and I the cause!

And. Remember you one Angelo Martini?

Pro. Master-of-arms?

And. The same; I went to see
The practice at his school. One—a young man
Of most commanding person, and of 'haviour
To win all hearts—took up the foil to play,
And baring his right arm for freer use—

Pro. You saw the mark! You saw the scar!

And. I did.
The very cicatrix my knife had left.

Pro. I have not heard news of late—and such as this
Comes somewhat suddenly. Is he a man
Of honour?

And. I would think him so.

Pro. Would think?

Nay, then, I see what he is!

And. Indeed, my friend,

I cannot say he is, nor yet, is not.

Pro. You say he stands in danger, and from me.

'Tis clear as day—I comprehend it all!

He takes the part of France! His heart is French!

What Sicily gave to him he gives to France,

The curse of Sicily! And if a sword

Light on his head for that, who'll blame the smiter?

Not his own father?—Where abideth he?

And. In Messina, with the governor.

Pro. Perdition!

Scarce is the worst told, ere worse follows it!

The governor!

And. Nay, John of Procida,

Command thyself!

Pro. Couldst thou, if thou wast I?

Didst question him about that scar? Perhaps

'Tis not my son! O Heaven! in what a strait

A father may be put. I wish'd him dead

Just now. I own I did. Didst speak to him

About that mark?

And. No—there were standers-by.

Pro. You follow'd him out?

And. No.

Pro. No!

And. One beckon'd me

Apart, and held mine ear; and when I turn'd

To look for him, I miss'd him. He had gone.

Pro. You have seen him since, and spoken with him!

And. No:

I have craved an audience, but was out of time.

Pro. Indeed? A mighty man! You should have thrust

All let aside, and walk'd into his chamber,

And told him who you were—and what he was!

And. Nay, you forget I was a stranger to him.

Pro. Nay, you forgot you were his father's friend,

And by that title had a right to see him

At any place, at any hour o' the day.

Whom does he pass for?

And. Not thy son.

Pro. That's right!

I am very glad of that!

And. All I could learn

Was this;—that in the sacking of thy castle

Your son alone escaped, a little child.

The governor adopted him, and gave him

The liberal training of a cavalier,

Favour on kindness grew, and love on favour,

And e'en to-day the governor bestows

His only daughter on him.

Pro. Pestilence
Spring from their union if they wed!

And. My friend!

Pro. When is the ceremony?

And. I have said

To-day.

Pro. The hour—I mean the very hour.

And. At twelve.

Pro. Let the world end ere it takes place!

It must be stopp'd!

And. And who shall stop it?

Pro. I!

Straight to Messina. Come! The shortest way! [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*A Street in Messina.*

Enter STEPHANO, THOMASO, CARLO.

Carlo. No mischief come, last night, to any friends
Of yours?

Steph. None, sir, that I have heard.

Carlo. No throat

In frolic cut? No gamesome robbery?

No courtesy on wife or daughter forced

Of any that you know?

Steph. None.

Carlo. Luckless man!

My brother was compell'd keep open shop

After the hour of shutting—customers

So hot, there's not a shelf he has but gapes

For new replenishing—and that took place

Not half a month before. No pleasant news

With you?

Thom. None yet!

Carlo. Take comfort, it will come

Before we get to the end of the next street.

The Frenchman loves us, sirs; and, like true friend,

Will keep our spirits from stagnation, though

It be against our wills. 'Tis good for our health!

Come on. We'll have news yet, and plenty on't. [*Going.*]

Guis. [*without, at the opposite side*]. Thomaso! Stephano!

Stop! Turn! [*Enters.*] At last

You hear me, sirs! I am breath'd with chasing you!

Why were you not at home?

Thom. Why, what's the matter?

Guis. Blood, sirs!

Carlo. The news!

Guis. News! 'Tis the common cry
Of every day!

Thom. Yes; but the common'st thing
That affects others, has a stranger's face

When it comes home to us. Whose blood, Guiscardo?
Take breath and tell us.

Guis. Are you not akin
To Angelo Martini?

Thom. and Steph. What of him?

Guis. His roof-tree suffer'd shame last night!—His daughter!
His only child!—That force could dare assail
A temple of such holy chastity!
The spoiler of her honour and her life—
For with her virgin jewel he purloin'd
The witness of the theft—a mangled corse,
Cast into the street by Angelo, who came
Too late to save, but timely for revenge,
Lies 'fore the father's gate, which hounds beset,
More monstrous for the human forms they wear,
Howling to lap the blood of Angelo;
And casting looks of savage purposes
On the few friends, that, holding yet aloof,
With augmentation might defy their fangs!
Have you your weapons?

Steph. Yes. Who goes without them
That walks through streets of licensed murderers?

Guis. Grasp them then! Hie ye straight to Angelo,
While to the castle I, in hope to move
A friend's good offices to stop the fray,
The favourite of the governor—Fernando.
And be ye resolute, comes it to more blood!
Death's nothing to the fear! There lies the pang,
And that we suffer every hour in the day.

[They go out severally.]

SCENE III.—*A Chamber in the Castle.*

Enter MARTEL and LOUIS.

Martel. What uproar keeps this din without the castle?

Louis. I know not, but the town is all astir;
Hither and thither fly the citizens.
What can it mean?

Martel. Here's one will give the cause.

Enter AMBROSE.

Well, Ambrose?

Amb. Count de Marlez has been murder'd,
And cast into the street! his body hack'd
From head to foot.

Martel. Who did it?

Amb. Angelo

Martini.

Martel. Was it in a quarrel, or
Did he assassinate him?

Amb. I know not.

This moment come I from before the house
Of Angelo Martini, which the friends
Of the slain count beset; while, close at hand,
Those of Martini wait, as if prepared
To take part with the murderer; who, the while,
From open casement in the upper floor,
With savage looks, holds forth a gory arm,
Grasping a blade of the same ghastly hue,
And, waving 't o'er the body of his child,
Blanch'd milk-white of her blood, and half-exposed,
Declares he'll ne'er surrender, save a corse
Mangled like his below,

Martel. Some love affair!

Conquerors will not brook coy mistresses!

Louis. This falls out ominously, does it not,
Upon the nuptial day?

Martel. The nuptial hour!

Strange nuptials, sir! It oft has moved my wonder,
The Governor, a stern and gloomy man,
Should so affect the young Sicilian.

Is't love? I have mark'd him oft, with looks that spoke
Aught but content, gazing upon Fernando
Minutes together; then, with deepest sigh,
Break off the scrutiny—for such it seem'd—
And turn to moody pondering. His daughter
Were better wed, methinks, to one of France
Than to a son of Sicily, of blood
Unknown, and all unfriended like her bridegroom.

Le Clerc [*without*]. Prevent him! Stop him!

Guis. [*without*]. Nay,
I will pass in!

Martel. Suffer him, good Le Clerc;
I know him. He's Fernando's friend, and comes
Doubtless to speak with him.

Louis. How wild he looks!

Amb. And spectre-like.

Guis. [*Rushing in, followed by LE CLERC.*] Fernando! Sirs!
Fernando!

Martel. Why, what's amiss?

Guis. Don't question me, dear sirs;
Fernando!

Martel. Here he is.

Enter FERNANDO.

Guis. [*Catching FERNANDO by the arm.*] Come forth with
me!

Come!—Angelo Martini!—

Fern. [*Resisting.*] Stop.

Guis. Nay, come!

Come!

Fern. What's the matter?

Guis. Read it in my looks,
And save the time of telling on't!—or come,
And I will tell you as we go along!
Come!

Fern. Hold! you'll tear my sleeve. Do you not know
It is my wedding-day?

Guis. Do you not know
A man call'd Angelo Martini, and
Not that he's in danger?

Fern. I infer so.

Guis. Thou dost? and art not now upon the way
To his house? Thy tutor! Angelo Martini!
'Sdeath, art thou flesh or stone? Offer'st thou not
To move!

Fern. You'll find it husbandry of time
To spend what's needed; else, you save to waste.
What of Martini?

Guis. Ay!—So!—Is't the way?
Ought friends to take it leisurely in straits
Where hottest speed is slow for those they love,
Lying in jeopardy? Sit down, sir. Well [*Sits himself.*]
We sit as stand!—we progress either way
As fast! Sit down and listen. Yesternight—
Pray you your chair—I cannot well go on
Until I see you at your ease. [*FERNANDO sits.*]—Last night,
As I said, a thief—not such as filches coin—
Was the unbidden guest of Angelo;
Chamber'd with his fair child, without her leave,
As her gored breast can vouch for you; Angelo—
I trust my tongue does not outstep your ear?

Fern. Go on!

Guis. In good time, sir. Well! Angelo
Waked by a shriek—'twas not *without* the house,
But came from the quarter where his daughter couch'd—
And—taking the strange summons with more heat
Of apprehension, than will suffer one,
That hath the use of limb, to lie abed,
Or sit his chair as we do—to afford
The aid was needed, rush'd where he might give it,
And at the door encounter'd him who had made him
A host without his privity or wish,
Dagger in hand, sir, slinking from the bier,
Had been, an hour before, the virgin's bed!

Fern. What follow'd?

Guis. One might guess, a blow!—Yes, sir—
While the blood runs, 'twill heat or cool upon
Occasion. Yes, sir; Angelo, our friend,
A generous man, although we say it, like
To exact penalty for injury
Done to a common friend—and how much more,
An only child!—struck—nor with naked hand,

Nor easily contented ! Blow begot
Blow, till the body of the Count——

Fern. What count ?

Guis. The Count de Marlez.

Fern. Was he stabb'd by Angelo ?

Guis. And stabb'd till not a palm's breadth of his body

But bears the crimson seal that witnesses

The glut of ravening vengeance, as it lies

In the street, cast forth the casement, of whose sill

Angelo makes a bier to show his child

To some amaze-confounded lookers on.

While the retainers, countrymen, and friends

Of the Count assault the gate of Angelo

To get at him and tear him limb from limb ;

The which thy timely presence had prevented.

But not enough thou know'st thy friend requires thee ;

Behoves his need be woven a history ;

And while the loom's a-going, which I must ply,

They massacre the man who taught and loved thee !

Fern. Go forth, my friends, and succour Angelo.

Take others with you—all the aid you can !

Dissuade his enemies from violence.

Use the Duke's name ! Command them to forbear,

And leave rebuke to him. [MARTEL and others rush out.

Guis. Go'st thou not too ?

Play'st thou the friend by heartless deputy,

To foil the foes that work with all their hearts !

Keep'st thou the castle when Martini's house

Is made the stall of savage butchery ?

Lend'st him a *finger* when he wants thy hand,

Thy limbs, and body ?

Fern. 'Tis my wedding-day ;

The very hour I lead my bride to church.

Guis. Thou wast his son to Angelo Martini,

And when thy presence would be life to him,

And it is ask'd of thee, thou givest it not,

But send'st him that of men who would look with coldness,

If not with joy, upon Martini's carcass ;

Because thy nuptials may not be delay'd !

Ached thy bride's head, would it not stop them ?—or,

Would they go on, fell the Duke sudden sick ?

Or chanced to shake Messina with a fit

Of the earthquake ? or the Cataracts of *Ætna*

Began to play ?—But not a pause, although

Thou heard'st the life-blood gurgling in the throat

Of Angelo Martini ! Fare thee well—

If well ingratitude fared ever.

Mingle thy blood with those, at thought of whom,

Wast thou the tithe of a Sicilian,

Thy blood would curdle ! We were brothers once ;

One mind—one soul ! We now are two—apart !

Disjoin'd ! Opposed ! Never to meet again

Except to the woe of the one or t'other of us. [Goes out.

Fern. Come back! Fool! Meddler! Braggart!

Iso. [*Entering.*] How is this?

What dost thou with thy weapon in thy hand!

Ha! by thy looks, it was not without need

Thou drewest it! Sweet heaven! I saw thee thus

Last night!

Fern. Where, dearest?

Iso. In my dreams, Fernando;

That brought me naught but fearful images!

Tumults, where daggers gleam'd and blood ran free

Along the kennels of the streets, instead

Of its own channels. There, my friend, were you

And I in the midst, your one arm circling me,

Your other my defence 'gainst horrid men

That stood around, a stride or two aloof,

Like hounds, awhile at bay, prepared to spring!

Ah! then I knew the taste of death—great Heavens!

The sickness on't! Yet e'en that sickness still

Sweetness, methought, to die along with thee.

They struck—you fell! I waked while yet the room

Rang with a shriek. Put up thy sword, lest now

A prodigy should harrow up my soul,

And drops of gore, uncall'd, start on its blade!

Is't up?

Fern. It is.

Iso. 'Tis very strange, Fernando;

This is our wedding-day, and yet I feel

As though we should not marry.

Fern. Wouldst thou, then,

Our nuptials should be marr'd?

Iso. No!—would you think

'Twas the coy maid of but a week ago

That answer'd, now, so promptly? 'Twas not quickly,

I learn'd to love you—though, to do you justice,

No master ever labour'd more to teach.

But now, methinks, I have the lesson better

By heart than you have.

Fern. Better!

Iso. Yes, Fernando!

And so you'd find, were you to slight the pupil

You took such pains with once. I would not have

Our nuptials marr'd,—and, more, they shan't be so,

Have I the power to help it.

Fern. Isoline—

Thy father!—

Iso. Well?—Say on;

I'd hear thee say't, though all the world were by.

Fern. I bless thee for thy bounteous love!

Enter GOVERNOR.

Gov. Come, child!

And on my other hand, Fernando, come.

The bridal company, in readiness

To attend you to the altar, wait for you.

[*As they are going, MARTEL and LOUIS enter hastily.*]

What would you, friends?

Martel. A word, sir, with Fernando.

Gov. Be brief, then, as you may. [*Leading ISOLINE off.*]

Iso. [*Stopping and turning.*] Fernando!

Fern. Love,

A moment and I'm with you!

Gov. Isoline!

Iso. I come!—the ground appears to hold my steps.

[*She goes out with the GOVERNOR.*]

Fern. Well, friends; were you in time?

Martel. To see the house

Of Angelo Martini in a blaze;

Lit by his own hand, the funereal pyre

Of his slain child! Whence, soon as 'twas in flames,

Taking advantage of the pause in which

Amaze enchain'd his foes, with clotted blade

Old Angelo burst forth, a spectacle

Of blood-congealing horror, that awhile

Deprived of use the members which, except

For such a frost, had dealt him fifty deaths.

But soon it turn'd to thaw, yet not until

Martini's friends surrounded him; and now

Along the streets a running fight they keep,

Marking an ample, ghastly track, with blood,

And here and there a body drain'd of it.

Fern. For mercy's sake provide you with a guard

And use all pains to stop this hideous fray,

And above all to save Martini's life!

Fly friends! O spare not speed! Do all you can

This fray, untimely, to o'ertake, and stop!

[*MARTEL and LOUIS go out; FERNANDO following.*]

SCENE IV.—*The Outside of a Church.*

Enter Virgins strewing Flowers after the Bridal Party.

CHORUS OF VIRGINS.

As now the track with flowers we strew,

Your path of life with joys be fair!

Though wither these, no fading there;

Nor thorny care your footsteps rue.

[*At the end of the Singing, Tumult is heard without at a distance.*]

Gov. What din is this that seems approaching us?

Le Clerc. [*Entering hastily.*] My lord, take shelter in the church! There's death

In the streets.

Gov. What! Of Messina, sir; and I
 its governor? Am I to slink away
 In fear? Swords, gentlemen! What man is he
 Comes first? who flies, yet halts,—whom they, in chase of,
 Striving, yet seem to fear, to overtake,
 Turning pursuit to flight whene'er he stops
 And shows them front?

Le Clerc. 'Tis Angelo Martini.

Gov. What savage deed hath made a brute of him,
 That men become a pack, and hunt him thus?

Le Clerc. He has kill'd the Count de Marlez!

Fern. Life for life!

The count first kill'd his daughter—little wrong,
 To wrong more grievous that preceded it.

Gov. You are sure of this?

Fern. I am.

Gov. Succour him, sirs.

Fern. Too late!

Mart. [without]. Take that!

[*Enters, staggering, followed by GUISCARDO and others
 with swords drawn.*]

—Full payment, slave, and prompt!

As you are Christian men, don't suffer them
 Hack me to death. I am wounded mortally!

Fern. How is it, Angelo Martini?

Mart. Thus,

Fernando, thus!—My daughter!—Where were you?
 But I forgive you!

Fern. O, look up, old man!

Guis. He sleeps too sound, Fernando, to awake!

My lord, the Governor, protection for
 The friends of Angelo Martini, who,
 With naked weapons had not stood in the streets
 But to protect him from foul butchery,
 His mansion suffer'd violence, last night,
 And murder in the person of his child;
 Now burn'd to ashes with her natal roof,
 Which Angelo himself in frenzy fired.

He caught and slew the caitiff, for which act,
 By nature warranted, if not by law,
 Began this game of death, which we would spoil,
 But thus the just yet weaker side hath lost.

Gov. Though great his crime first slain, the blood, so shed,
 Was French! Moreover, it was noble! Look
 Yourselves to your lives—I will not answer for them
 Beyond Messina! Hence, and sheathe your blades.
 Marks are upon them that offend our eyes,
 And breed you danger!

Guis. Are we safe, the while?

Gov. You are, but quit Messina. Guard them to
 The outskirts of the town.

Guis. Fernando, speak.

Look there. Your bridal flowers have gone, you see,
To deck a bloody bier. So fare thy joys!
[*Goes out with others guarded.*]

Gov. Remove the body. In our way it lies.

Iso. Nay, father; sooner let us go about!

Gov. Come on, then.

Pro. [*Coming from the back of the stage.*] Stop. The rites
must not proceed.

Gov. They have not yet begun!

Pro. Nor must begin!

Gov. Who shall prevent them?

Pro. Heaven. In the name of which

I charge you to desist!

Gov. Your reasons?

Pro. Those,

The bridegroom, when alone, shall learn; for him
They most regard.

Fern. Impart them, then!

Pro. Not here.

Gov. You juggle with us!

Pro. No; the part I act

Is honest.

Gov. You are a religious man?

Pro. A man devoted to a holy cause!

Young man, let go that hand and come with me!

Iso. Is this the dark fulfilling of my dream?

Respect you, my Fernando, what he says?

Fern. His tone, his words, his looks, his gestures, all

Declare authority.

Iso. O, do not go?

Pro. He must, would he escape my curse; which here
On him, and all who hold alliance with him,

I shall invoke, resists he my commands.

Gov. You dare not do it!

Pro. Dare not!—listen then—

Iso. Peace!—Drop my hand and go.

Pro. She bids thee go.

Come.

Iso. Go, Fernando!

Pro. Mark again; she bids thee.

Why shouldst thou hesitate? The cause is thine.

And thou thyself art constituted judge.

I hope thou'rt a brave man, and not afraid

To trust thyself with me. If idly, or

On slight pretence I interpose, thou knowest

Thou canst come back, and then the rites go on.

So mayst thou gain thy bride, and 'scape my curse.

Iso. Shall he come back in any case?

Pro. He shall.

Iso. Go! go! Fernando.

Pro. That is the third time

She bade thee go.

Fern. I follow!

Pro. Come along.

[PROCIDA and FERNANDO go out. ISOLINE faints in her father's arms, as the latter disappears.]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Mountain Pass. Etna in the distance.*

Enter PROCIDA and FERNANDO.

Pro. Look up. What seest thou?

Fern. Etna.

Pro. Where stands Etna?

Fern. In Sicily.

Pro. Then this is Sicily,
Where Etna stands, and thou look'st up to it.
And yet, methinks, thou knowest not thou stand'st
In Sicily.

Fern. I know it, well as thou!

Pro. Deny it, then! Tell him, who says thou stand'st there,
He but insults thee! Rather say thou stand'st
In any other isle that spots the sea;
And give thy oath to it, though Etna there,
Before thee, should break silence at the lie,
And bellow forth—"Tis Sicily thou stand'st in!"

Fern. Beware! young blood is hot.

Pro. Behoves it, then,
Beware it runs no peril from its heat.
Young blood is generous, too!—not always!—Then
Its heat is virtue bringing virtue forth,
As sun, the healthful plant, in stronger flower.
Its heat is as the thing it acts upon;
As summer in the garden genders fruit,
But in the swamp breeds poison. Know me, sir,
So far. I wear a sword! [*Throws off his gown.*] Now of thy
heat

Why should I stand in fear?

Fern. Lest thou offend
Mine honour!

Pro. Show it me, I'll not offend it;
Else I offend mine own! If I gainsay
The square, the plummet, or the level, what
Shall I gain credence for? I am a fool
Or knave. I either know not; or deny,
Yet know! But honour is the name as well
As thing, and with the thing not always goes,
But serves a spurious owner, as the stamp
Of gold at times is given to base coin.
The gambler that will load a die, will cut
Your throat, so you dare tell him on't—for honour!

The libertine who uses, for your shame,
 Your hospitable trust—a felon, worse
 Than he who filches purses with his sword—
 Demands your blood, if you impugn his honour!
 Whence, with a coward world, the bully Lust
 Hath gracious entertainment at the hands
 Which hold the custody of maidens' snow,
 And never question'd matrons'. What do you say
 To the honour of a traitor—false at once
 To his liege lord and country?—taking part
 With their arch, pitiless, contentless foes?
 Shall such a man have honour? Ay, shall he so,
 Hath he the bloodhound's quality to vouch
 The barefaced lie a truth!

Fern. Thou lovest danger!

Pro. No, I love virtue, sir, and fear not danger.
 Art thou Sicilian?

Fern. Yes.

Pro. Sicilian born?

Fern. Yes.

Pro. In the mountain island first drew breath?

Fern. Yes.

Pro. Art thou sure? Where saw'st thou first the sun,
 To know him as thou recollectest?

Fern. In
 Messina.

Pro. Knowest thou the history
 Of this thy native land?—who was her king
 When first thou mad'st acquaintance with the sun,
 The blessed sun God gave thee leave to see
 When he vouchsafed thee draw the breath of life
 In Sicily?

Fern. Why Manfred, then, was king.

Pro. What came of him?

Fern. He lost his crown.

Pro. 'Tis false!

Fern. [*Aside.*] What awes me in the presence of this man,
 That while he chafes me thus, I thus forbear!

Pro. Were one to take thy purse from thee by force,
 Wouldst say that thou hadst lost it? Thou wouldst say
 That thou wast robb'd of it! So Manfred was
 Robb'd of his crown. Lost it! Who, say you now,
 Is king of Sicily?

Fern. Charles of Anjou.

Pro. That's false

Again! Charles of Anjou is an usurper
 And not a king!—not king of *Sicily*.
 Manfred was slain in battle, was he not?

Fern. He was.

Pro. He was! He died as became a king
 Defending his own crown against the robber
 Who wrench'd it from his brow. You answer well!

You know your country's history! What next?
 Who follow'd in the strife? Who struggled next
 With the arch felon?—held his throat to him—
 For it was nothing else, with powers so broken—
 Ere he would tamely be a looker-on,
 And see him wear the spoil?

Fern. Conradine.

Pro. Yes!

The chivalrous, the patriotic prince!
 He took the cause up—but he lost the day.

Fern. And, with the day, his life.

Pro. How? Can't you tell?

Know you, so far, the tragedy, so well,
 And do you halt at the catastrophe
 Which brings the crowning horror of the whole?
 The prince was taken captive—taken alive—
 Whole! without scath! No wound, the matter, even,
 Of a pin's scratch! Now, mark the freebooter
 In Charles of Anjou—him thou namedst now
 The king of Sicily. Mark, now, how blood
 And plunder go together, like sworn friends.
 Conradine was a captive. What had he done?
 What Charles himself had done in such a case,
 And had a right so to have done, were he
 A saint and not a robber. Fought for the crown
 Of his forefathers! What could Conradine
 That Charles need fear? He was bound hand and foot.
 He was as one that's bed-ridden!—that's struck
 With a palsy! Charles had just as much to fear
 From Conradine as from an infant in the cradle!
 What did he to him?—He beheaded him!

Fern. 'Twas sacrilege!

Pro. 'Twas murder!—murder, sir!

Murder and sacrilege!—Conradine met the scaffold
 In his own kingdom, like a host that's butcher'd
 In his own house, by thieves! Now mark, young man,
 How bruised, broken, lost in fortunes, still
 The noble spirit to the last bears up
 And towers above its fate. Beside the block,
 Within the axe's glare, yet would not he
 Give up his righteous cause; but from his hand
 His gauntlet drew and flung into the space
 'Twixt him and those who came to see him die.
 "For Jesu' sake," he cried, "who loves me there,
 "Pick up my gage, and with it take the charge
 "A dying man gives with his parting breath;
 "That he present it to that kinsman of
 "My house, who takes its rightful quarrel up,
 "And whom with all my rights I here invest!"
 'T see the story somewhat touches thee.

Fern. I never heard it told so true before.

ast thou a stander-by?

Pro. I was. What then?

Fern. Didst thou pick up the gage?

Pro. Wouldst thou have done it?

Fern. I would!

Pro. And wherefore?

Fern. Out of pity for
That murder'd king.

Pro. What!—Given thy private cares,
Hopes, havings, up, to consecrate thy life
To his most desperate cause?—his throne usurp'd!
His land o'errun! his people scatter'd, that
Together not so many hung as one
Might call a broken troop!—so seeming-lost
A cause, as that, at cost so dear, hadst thou
Embraced, and ta'en the gauntlet up?

Fern. I had!

Pro. [*Taking a glove from his breast.*] There 'tis! There!—
as I pluck'd it from the scaffold foot!
The look that martyr cast upon me then!
It shed more healing unction on my soul,
Than thought of thousand masses, at my death,
Could do, each chanted by as many lips,
And all of holy men. Now mark how Right,
Although, at setting out, a dwarf in thews,
By holding on, will gather sinew, till
It moves that giant Might! With seconding
Levies, munitions, allies, subsidies—
None other than this empty glove, I went
From Sicily; where now I stand again,
With monarchs and their kingdoms at my back,
The sworn abettors of the righteous hand,
Which fleshless, tendonless, reduced to bone,
Its holy cause thus clothes with life again,
And arms with retribution. That same hand
Once fill'd this glove, which now I hold to thee.
Take it!

Fern. For what?

Pro. To swear by it.

Fern. The oath?

Pro. Death to the Gaul, whoe'er he be, that now
Has footing in the land!—Death without pause
Of ruth—Eye, ear, be stone to voice or look
Of deprecation! Once your blade is out,
While there's a tyrant's heart to lend a sheath,
Ne'er to resume its own!

Fern. An oath like that
I will not take.

Pro. Thou wilt not? Thou'rt a traitor!

Fern. Ha!

Pro. Thou'rt a coward!

Fern. [*Drawing.*] Try if I fear death!

Pro. Death is a little thing to brave or fear.

Except the thought of the after-reckoning,
 The which to fear becomes, not shames a man.
 'Tis but a plunge and over, ta'en as oft
 By the feeble as the stout! Give me the man
 That's bold in the right—too bold to do the wrong!
 Not bold as that, thou art a traitor still
 And coward!

Fern. Draw!

Pro. For what?—to pleasure thee?
 To place myself on base equality
 With one whom I look down upon?

Fern. Or draw,
 Or I shall spurn thee!

Pro. Villain, to thy knee!

Fern. My knee!

Pro. What!—Fear'st thou degradation? How
 Can *he* crouch lower than he does who kneels
 To his own weaknesses, when Duty bids him
 Stand up, and take the manly post, becomes him,
 At the side of Virtue? Were thy mother—she
 That bore thee in her womb—in fetters, how
 Wouldst deal with those that put them on? Wouldst talk
 And laugh with them—shake hands with them—embrace
 them?

"Thou wouldst not!" But I tell thee, slave, thou wouldst;
 For what's thy country, be she not thy mother,
 And like a mother loved by thee? Thou slave,
 That seekest kindred with thy country's foes!
 Hast thou a father?

Fern. Draw!

Pro. Hast thou a father?

Fern. But with my sword's point will I answer thee!

Pro. Hast thou a father, boy?

Fern. Hast thou a hand?

Behoves that it be quick, and seek thy sword!
 Thy life's in danger!

Pro. Hast thou a father, still
 I say to thee?

Fern. Thy sword, or I'm upon thee!

Pro. Then wilt thou have a murder on thy soul;
 For from my stand I will not budge an inch,
 Nor move, so far, my arm to touch my sword,
 Until thou answer'st me. Hast thou a father?

Fern. [*Bursting into tears.*] No,—no! thou churlish, harsh,
 remorseless man—

That bait'st me with thy coarse and biting words,
 As boors, abroad, let loose unmuzzled dogs
 Upon a tether'd beast!—my arm withheld
 By thy defencelessness, that hast defence,
 At hand, but will not use it—Who art thou
 To use me thus?—to do me shameful wrong
 And then deny me means to right myself?

What have I done to thee to use my heart
 As if its strings were thine to strain or rend!
 Thou mak'st my veins hot with my boiling blood,
 And not content, thou followest it up,
 Mine eyes inflaming with my scalding tears,
 Thou kindless, ruthless man! Hast thou a father?
 I never knew one!

Pro. [Aside.] I thank Heaven!

Fern. Thou hadst

A father—hadst a father's training—O
 How blest the son that hath! O Providence,
 What is there like a father to a son?
 A father, quick in love, wakeful in care,
 Tenacious of his trust, proof in experience,
 Severe in honour, perfect in example,
 Stamp'd with authority! Hadst such a father?
 I knew no training, save what fostering
 Gave me, in charity; and was bestow'd
 Like bounty to a poor dependent; which
 He might take or leave. Those who protected me
 Were masters of my native land, not sons.
 How could I learn the patriot's lofty lesson?
 They told me Sicily had given me birth,
 But then they taught me, also, I was son
 To a contentless and ungracious mother.
 And they were kind to me! What wouldst thou have
 Of a young heart, but what you'd ask of wax—
 To take the first impression given to it?
 Except that, unlike wax, it is not quick
 What once it takes to render up again.

Pro. [Aside.] O, my poor boy!

Fern. If thou hadst such a father,

'Twas cruel, knowing that thou wast so rich,
 To taunt me, where, knew'st not that I was poor,
 Thou mightst at least suspect my poverty.
 How had I loved my father! He had had
 The whole of my heart! I would have given it him
 As a book to write in it whate'er he would!
 I never had gainsaid him—never run
 Counter to him. I had copied him, as one
 A statue of the rare and olden virtue,
 In jealous, humble imitation.
 I had lived to pleasure him. Before I had
 Disgraced him, I had died!

Pro. [Aside.] My son! My son!

Fern. Thou weep'st! Why?—Why?

Pro. Thou wast made captive in
 A storm'd hold.

Fern. I was.

Pro. That hold belong'd
 To John of Procida.

Fern. It did.

Pro. 'Twas storm'd
And taken, in his absence.

Fern. So 'tis said.

Pro. That John of Procida had then a son
Just four years old.

Fern. That age was mine, I have heard,
When first the Governor adopted me.

Pro. There was no other child within the castle.

Fern. Was there not?

Pro. No!

Fern. I must have been that child!

Pro. Upon his right fore-arm he bore a mark.

Fern. Yes; here!

Pro. Yes; in the very place thou point'st to.

Fern. I am the son of John of Procida!

Pro. Thou art!—and I am John of Procida.

Fern. [*Falling on his knee.*] Father!

Pro. My son! My boy! My child I left
At four years old and thought was dead!

Fern. Thou own'st me?

Pro. Own thee!—Ay!—Look at me and tell me, boy,
Dost thou not see thy father?

Fern. Yes! Thy looks

Are words of love that call me, from thy feet,
Up to thy arms.

Pro. Up to them, then!

Fern. [*Rising, and throwing himself into the arms of*
PROCIDA.] My father!

Pro. O, my son!

Fern. What shall I do?

Pro. What mean you?

Fern. What shall I do?

Give me the glove!

Pro. My son!

Fern. The gauntlet of
The martyr king!

Pro. There!—Stop! Not now, my son:
I find thee quick in the affection

Thou owest me; and which, like a rich spring

Just struck, in ample volume bubbles high,

And runs a rapid stream! Not yet, my son;

I will not take advantage of the burst

To let it hurry thee along with it.

A sudden change and violent, is scarce

A lasting one. Thou might'st repent it. No;

I'll prove thee ere thou join'st the holy cause.

Thou to Messina shalt return once more,

Before thou see'st her free. My word was given.

Thou art a man. Men that uphold the name

Act, not from impulse, but reflection.

Declare thy meditated nuptials things

Thy duty to thy neighbour and thy God

Compels thee to abandon; then come back,
With every let removed, and take the oath;
And live the son of John of Procida.

Fern. When I can say thy first behest is done,
I'll show myself to thee. Farewell! [Goes out.

Pro. Farewell!

How suddenly his visage brighten'd up,
At mention of returning to Messina.

What speed is there! Is't all on *my* account?

Now he is gone, my heart misgives me. What

Have I done! Why do we pray that we be spared

Temptation, but that 'tis a whirlpool, which,

Once we're within its vortex, draws us in,

Charybdis like, and sucks us down to ruin!

Should I call him back? I will! He is out

Of hearing! Should his love for her be strong?

I did not note if she was very fair.

But souls were never made for eyes to read,

And there lies woman's beauty! If she loves

Strongly—and O how strongly woman loves—

The force of two hearts must he struggle with!

I'll trust in Heaven! Alas! how many trust

In Heaven, and, all the while, betray themselves!

If he's my son!—I talk with fifty years

For counsellors! O, it was oversight,

Preposterous in a father! If I have found

My son to lose him—best I ne'er had found him.

Yet ere I lose him I will risk my life—

Risk all—except the sacred cause I'm pledged to. [Goes out.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Isoline's Chamber.*

Enter GOVERNOR and ISOLINE.

Gov. Thus, save the nature of the grievous wrong
Which on my conscience weighs—which, to repair
I to Fernando would have wedded thee,
Will wed thee still, comes he to claim thy hand—
Of all have I possess'd thee—who he is;
The mortal enmity his father bears me;
The public foe join'd to the private one;
His hatred of our race, love for his own;
Devotion to the dynasty, held sway
In Sicily, ere France supplanted it!
Hopes to make head again; efforts, intrigues
With foreign powers to raise up foes to France,
That he whose presence stopp'd the rites to-day,
May act in concert with the Procida,

Though past the scope of probability,
Lies within that of chance; for though Fernando
Knows not his parentage, yet accident
May have reveal'd the son to Procida.
View then these nuptials thus. If solemnized,
Joy not without regrets—if frustrated,
Regrets with yet their solaces.

Iso. I will, sir.

Gov. Do so; and so good night. Another word.
Set not thy heart on seeing him again;
He never may return. Or, say he should,
Expect him to depart and come no more.
You mark?

Iso. I do, sir.

Gov. Now good night again.

Iso. What, Marguerite!—Come hither, Marguerite.
Hast done it? [*To MARGUERITE, who enters.*]

Mar. He is in the oratory.

Iso. I thank the holy man. He will remain there?

Mar. Ay, madam.

Iso. He was ever good to me!

Fernando will return to-night—I know
He will. My heart assures me that he will,
And lovers' hearts a strange foreknowledge have,
Though read they not the stars. That's he! Go, look!

[*MARGUERITE goes out.*]

O, that this hour were past! Alas, 'tis thus
We wish us ever nearer to our graves,
With fear of this, and with desire for that;
Flying from one thing, following another,
As rushing from the very thing itself
For which we pray, towards that we pray against!
Knew I the moment—ay, the very moment
I wedded him—I should be spouse to death;
Away with life! at once, he should be mine!

Enter MARGUERITE.

Mar. 'Tis not Fernando.

Iso. Keep upon the watch. [*MARGUERITE goes out.*]
He shall be mine! Shall private enmities,
On others' parts, set bars 'twixt those that love?
Make of two hearts, grown one, two hearts again?
Distinct and alienate? or rather—for,
Judging mine own Fernando's heart by mine,
That can't be done—untwine two lives, which love
Has drawn together till they grow like tendrils,
Knotted and interwreathed, that without bruising
You cannot part them—maybe killing them?
It should not be, and shall not! Now the chances?
No let can I divine to sway Fernando,
Except that father, yet he knows not of;
And whom, new found, new feelings welcoming,

Will, at the moment, large surrender make,
Haply at cost of love itself! What then?
Love that is steadfast brooks not sacrifice.
It may submit awhile; but, in the end,
It ever claims its own—the paramount
Of all affections! So, his love, at first
O'ercome, anon will vindicate itself.
Whereto no weak retreating, no false shame
On the part of mine, shall offer hindrance to me,
From giving 't all my help.

Enter MARGUERITE.

Mar. I hear a step.

Iso. Go see if it be his. [*MARGUERITE goes out.*] Why
should I blush

To claim my love's due right? Is love a thing
To blush for?—Love!—the choicest of all
The household pure affections, things of truth
And piety next what we owe to Heaven!
Love that makes friendship poor—that mocks enhancement—
Itself possession endless!—that's example
Of loyalty!—its master better served
Than monarchs on their thrones, his throne himself!
'That more abounds in sunshine of content,
Than destiny, in clouds, to quench the light.
Whole in itself! Love, that is chastity
'Fore that of vestal perfectness!—the world
For choice, yet one with leave of Heaven selecting
And giving all beside to negligence!—
As the refiner the alloy, when once
He finds the extracted gold. He shall be mine!
The maid, that's not stanch stickler for her love,
Hath little on't to strive for. *She* may smile
Scornful good-bye, and turn upon her heel;
Forget and love again; or think she does—
For by the love I feel, she knows not love;
My love's a heap takes all my heart to hold,
As rich as large, and shan't be cast away!

Re-enter MARGUERITE.

Mar. 'Tis he!—I beckon'd him. He follows me.

Iso. Take stand behind the hanging stealthily,
And there keep watch. And ever recollect
You are mine honour's sentinel, and bound
To let thine eye no parley hold with sleep,
So much as e'en a wink. As open as
Your eye, your ear; to note whate'er may pass,
And in thy memory to book it down,
And faithfully; for, on some syllable
May something hang, which in esteem I hold
Next to my soul's salvation! Quick! He comes.

[*MARGUERITE hides.*]

Enter FERNANDO.

Iso. [*after a pause*]. Fernando, art thou there?

Fern. Ay, Isoline.

Iso. Art thou indeed?

Fern. I am.

Iso. I note thee speak,
Yet can't believe thee there.

Fern. Why?

Iso. Why, Fernando!

If but the morning, noon, or afternoon,
Withdrew thee from me; when thou camest again,
Thine eyes would melt, thy breath grow scant, thy cheek
Turn pale and red; and I was ever met
Like new-found, wondrous treasure! Yesterday
It had been so.—What hath befallen to-day
To make it look so utterly unlike
Its happy fellow? Dost not joy, Fernando,
To see me?

Fern. Joy!—Ay, as the mariner
To see the day, o'erta'en by storm at night,
But knows 'tis vain, his vessel foundering!

Iso. Explain thy speech, my love.

Fern. He was a friend
Who took me hence, a most dear friend, although
One that I wot not of until to-day,—
None other than a father, Isoline!

Iso. Thou hast found a father?

Fern. I have found a father!
And with that father I have held such converse
As hath transform'd me so—except my love—
I should not know myself; and being thus
Dissimilar to him this morning was
Thy bridegroom; from this night—that should have been
Our bridal-night—all days and nights to come
Am nothing to thee thou mayst name, except
A merchant sailor for his argosie,
That holds possession of the rock whercon
She struck and went to pieces!

Iso. We must part!
Lovest thou me still, Fernando?

Fern. Yes!

Iso. As ever?

Fern. As ever!

Iso. Then, we do not part, my friend!

Fern. Is't Isoline that speaks?

Iso. Yes! Isoline!

The very maid thou know'st so call'd—a maid,
So chary of her virgin sanctity,
Thee, her betrothed—thee, her almost espoused,
She challenges to tell the moment, only,
She gave thee license, she would bar thee name,

Or blush to hear thee do so. Lo, the strait
 She is in!—at such an hour—in such a place
 To parley with thee, and the argument
 Her grievance—thy default—default in love!
 In love, Fernando!—thy default in that,
 Wherein that she fell short was the reproach
 Thou woult'st to urge against her, to the day
 The very hour she gave thee slow consent
 To lead her to the priest.

Fern. Heaven witness!—

Iso. Peace!

No words—save such as make reply to questions.
 We part—why? Lies the reason at my door?
 Am I to blame? Then fit we part! If not,
 It is not fit! I have no right to suffer.
 Suffer, Fernando!—Did you hear me?—Heavens!
 The boon, with showers of tears and gusts of sighs
 You won from me, I call it suffering,
 To find you would not take! But I'm a woman,
 Strong in the faculty your nobler sex
 Advance large claims to, with most poor pretensions—
Once cleaving, cleaving still. We shall not part.
 You think to leave me! Try! The cement, that
 Becomes a portion of the things it joins,
 So that as soon you tear themselves apart
 As them from it, not more tenaciously
 Keeps hold than I! Piecemeal they may disjoin us,
 But perfect, never!

Fern. Isoline!

Iso. Fernando!

When I consented to become thy wife,
 I gave myself to thee. A thousand rites
 Not more had made me thine. I was thy wife
 That very hour—that very minute! All
 Ties of reserves, heed, other interests,
 That held my heart from thee I snapp'd at once,
 And like a woman gave it thee, entire!
 Whole and for ever!—ay, so gave it thee,
 Were I and all my race in slavery,
 And it, the ransom, which, on paying down,
 The shackles would fall off—gall as they might,
 They must remain. I could not take it back,
 Not even if I would.

Fern. Nay, Isoline!

Iso. Nay, hear me out, Fernando. There is a ward
 By nature set o'er the true woman's heart,
 Undream'd of by thy sex, except the few
 Of the true manhood, that contemplate them
 With delicate regards. Without that ward
 Woman is won and lost, and lost and won,
 As oft we see; but, with it, won—lost never;
 Though won unworthily—a contradiction,

Yet proof of her pure nature! which, it seems,
Falls to thy lot to test. You are, here, to take
The oath, I vow'd to take along with thee.

Fern. I cannot take it.

Iso. Cannot! You have a voice
And organs apt to frame it into speech,
Most pliant ones, as I can testify!

Fern. I may not take it.

Iso. May not! What are you?

What are you, sir! a ward, or a free man
Acting his part upon his own account—
Upon his own responsibility?

Fern. I may not for *thy* sake.

Iso. For my sake, sir!

The sand of the very hour you gave me leave
To look to myself, is running still!—not half,
Nor quarter out! For shame, to wrong me first,
And then to mock me!

Fern. I must take an oath—

Iso. When?—where?—to whom? No matter! You were
bound

To me, before, to take an oath—and shall—
And judge me worthily as you're a man!
But that I have a title to thy hand—
But that 'tis mine, upon the warranty
Of Earth and Heaven, that heard thee say 'twas mine—
Brought it the wealth and power of all the thrones
That glitter on the earth, and I could have it
By only asking for it—ere I could speak
The word, I'd choke, blacken before thee, fall
A corpse at thy feet!

Fern. Now let me speak! To wed thee
Is wedding thee to misery!

Iso. Content;

I will wed misery.

Fern. My Isoline,

Thou wouldst ally thee to a house, the foe
Of thee and all thy race!

Iso. Unto that house

Will I ally myself.

Fern. The consequences!

Iso. Be they the worst, I am prepared for them.
I'll take them all on mine own head.

Fern. The strife that's sure to come!—Man as I am, my soul
Sickens to think on't.

Iso. Woman as I am,
I dare it to come on.

Fern. Rivers of blood
Will flow!

Iso. They are welcome, though my veins be breathed
To help the flood.—Redeem your promise, sir!

Fern. O, Isoline! By this dear hand—

Iso. Hold off!

In the relation wherein now we stand,
I will not suffer even touch from thee!
Nor shalt thou trifle with me—for to speak
Or act, save to the point, is only trifling.
Here—in the oratory—close at hand,—
Attends the holy man, whose offices
You craved, this morning, and, at my entreaty,
Though strangely summon'd, hardly would forego.
Follow me to him! Take my hand before him!
Plight with me troth for troth!—or here remain
Till night gives up her watch to day, and then,
Departing hence, to crown thy bounty, leave me
A spotless maiden with a blasted name!

Fern. Thou couldst not dream of such perdition, and
To bring it on thyself!

Iso. Men cannot dream

What desperate things a desperate woman dreams,
Until they see her act them!

Fern. Desperate!

Iso. Yes, desperate! Sweet patience! Men go mad
To lose their hoards of pelf, when hoards as rich
With industry may come in time again!
Yet they go mad—It happens every day!
Have not some slain themselves? Yet if a maid—
Who finds that she has nothing garner'd up
Where she believed she had a heart in store
For one she gave away—is desperate,
You marvel at her! Marvel!—when the mines
Of all the earth are poor as beggary
To make her rich again! Am I ashamed
To tell thee this?—No!—Save the love we pay
To Heaven, none purer, holier, than that
A virtuous woman feels for him she'd cleave
Through life to. Sisters part from sisters—brothers
From brothers—children from their parents—but
Such woman from the husband of her choice
Never!—Give me the troth you promised me.

Fern. Never didst thou reflect that I was born
In Sicily?

Iso. I know thou'rt a Sicilian.

Fern. Didst ne'er reflect upon it?

Iso. To what end
Should I reflect?

Fern. To spurn me as a man
Devoid of honour!

Iso. Who dares call thee so?

Fern. He who dares speak the truth. Thou know'st—thou
must—

The wrongs my country suffers!

Iso. Yes: I know

She suffers wrongs. I have wept for them, Fernando.

Fern. Have you?—Have you wept for them? I have heard them

Without a tear! Am I a man of honour?

Iso. What good were it to weep?

Fern. None—but to feel

As you could weep—and then, with manlier thought,

Let fiery revenge instead of pity

Start into your eye and look the wronger dead!—

That—that were good. It were becoming, too,

In one who owes his birth to Sicily.

I have not done so! O, I have play'd a part

Most mean and spiritless!—Have proffer'd smiles

Where it behoved me to hurl frowns!—exchanged

Kind speech for curses, and griped hands with men,

With whom, had I clash'd daggers, I had done

The proper thing! What must men think of me?

Is there a lip I know, which, did it speak

The heart of the owner, would not curl at me?

O, shame!—to be despised! regarded as

A thing, the man who understood himself

Would use his foot to!—to despise one's self!

That's it! The scorn of all the world beside

I could endure, had I my own respect;

But that is lost. No man can call me worse

Than I behold myself.

Iso. Fernando—

Fern. Nay!

Suffer me speak, for it relieves my heart!

And as you love me—which I know you do—

Do not gainsay me! I am a wretch more fit

To die than live!—and yet not fit to die!

For of all sins that on their heads men bear,

The heaviest, because the instrument

Of widest injury, are those which they

Commit against their country. I am fit

For nothing but a beacon, to point out

The rock whereon my honour suffer'd wreck,

That other men's may 'scape it.

Iso. Was that rock

Thy love for me?

Fern. Love?—Love?—What do I know

Of love? Where is the love I ought to bear

My country? Love?—It is a holy passion!

Generous!—exalted!—with integrity,

Lasting, as adamant!—He can know nothing

Of love like that who does not love his country!

Iso. Lov'st thou not me?

Fern. Old Angelo Martini!

Iso. Lov'st thou not me?

Fern. Angelo, my old master,

Who taught me how to guard a life, and take one,

Was murder'd yestorday, because he slew

A miscreant—the foulest in the list
 Of Infamy's pernicious sons!—was hunted
 Like a wild beast that's from a thicket sprung
 By dogs, and chased for sport! I might have saved him,
 And didn't!—Why?—Because my heart was rotten!
 I owed him manly knowledge—kindness—love.
 He loved me as his son. I suffer'd them
 To hunt him!—worry him to death! I did.
 Am I a man at all?

Iso. Lovest thou not me?

Fern. Ay, Isoline, as much
 As such a wretch can love!—Love thee?—I do,
 And holily—if holy thing can dwell
 In most unhallow'd habitation. Love thee?
 How dare I love thee? Temple as thou art
 Of tenderness, of chastity, and truth;
 Truth most ingenuous! Is it thy arms
 I should aspire to?—Thine, my Isoline!
 Whose foot ne'er spurn'd from thee a thing, so base,
 As that which now, in utter misery,
 I cast before it. *[Dashing himself upon the ground.]*

Iso. Rise, Fernando, rise,
 My lord—My love! What has afflicted thee
 To this severe extremity? Fernando!
 Thou scarest me! This passion hath no reason!
 'Tis wantonness of frenzy!—Dost thou hear me?
 If not thyself, dear love—consider me!
 That's right!—that's kind!—Give me thy hand and rise.
 I dream'd not this. Thank Heaven you're calmer! O
 I thought I loved thee all that I could love,
 But now I find my love, disdaining bounds,
 Is endless and unfathomable. Now
 I find I loved thee but a little, and
 With that remain'd contented; never dreaming
 How misery endears, and what a heap
 Of love was yet to come in company
 With thy affliction. What shall I do for thee!
 I am thy bane—a blight—a canker to thee!
 Shall I die? *[Plucks a dagger from his girdle.]*

Fern. Hold!—Stop!—Nay, let my dagger go!

Iso. You have griped hands, you said, with those with whom
 You ought to have clash'd daggers, and 'twas done
 For me!—Don't hurt me, dear Fernando! There!
[Lets go the dagger.]

Fern. Are you mad?

Iso. No!—Calm as you are—you shall see.

[Goes to the door and throws it open.]
 The door is free!—The first, the last embrace!
 And go!

Fern. Part?—Never! Thou art in my arms!
 Thou shalt not leave them but for the embrace,
 Succeeds the knot, that makes us one for ever!

Come woe!—come death!—come every kind of bane!
 Thou pattern of devotion! Thou true woman!
 Thou ruby worth a mine, and fitly set!
 Which is the way?—Where bides the holy man?
 Is that the portal to the oratory?
 What means thy cheek by dropping on my breast?
 Does it say “Yes?”—Hold up, mine own dear love,
 And come along. We’ll kneel to Heaven to-night,
 And trust to it for to-morrow.—Come, love, come.

[*They go out.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Chamber in the Castle.*

Enter LE CLERC and FRANCOIS.

Fran. Is this a bridal feast, where all seem glad
 Except the bride and bridegroom? Do you note
 Their looks?

Le Clerc. I do; and might I read thereby
 Their hearts, I should infer them ill at ease.

Fran. When were their nuptials solemnized?

Le Clerc. Last night,
 And very privately. You did not know—
 You are but new arrived from Syracuse?

Fran. Only in time to see the festival,
 If I may call it so, in honour of them.

Le Clerc. You know not then their nuptials were appointed
 For yesterday—were on the very eve
 Of taking place; nor what prevented them?

Fran. No.

Le Clerc. This way, then, and I shall tell you. Here
 Are company might interrupt us. Come! [*They go out.*]

Enter MARTEL and AMBROSE.

Mar. Abstraction half so deep ne’er saw I yet
 In one so high in favour with good fortune!

Excess of happiness, like that of grief,
 Will palsy feeling, till the owner seems not
 To know how hugely blest he is; but still
 Some token shows the nature of the lapse;
 Here, none. Within the table’s breadth of him
 I sat, and mark’d him. ’Twas not feasting, sir;
 He seem’d as he were jealous of the viands,
 Like one upon his guard ’gainst poison’d meats.
 He did not eat, but taste; while, at his side,
 His bride—whose eyes, purveyors never weary
 Of catering for their lord, kept ranging still
 The table over, to select for him
 Whate’er was daintiest—with busy lips,

Like pages who their errands blushing tell,
Commended to him ever and anon
The well-selected cheer, but all in vain.

Amb. I craved his leave to pledge him in a cup.
He took the cup; but straight its use forgetting,
Began to pore upon the rich contents:
Then, as a thing one does mechanically,
Raising it to his lip, without the due
And custom'd courtesy, he tasted it
And set it down again.

Mar. Remark'd you not
How strainingly he fix'd upon the door
His eyes, whene'er it chanced to open, as
He look'd for one to enter, he had rather
Should keep away?

Amb. That struck me very much,
And brought to mind the unwelcome visitor,
Whose errand stopp'd his nuptials yesterday.

Mar. So was't with me. For him, or some one like him,
Be sure he look'd, with more of certainty
Than doubt.—The bride and bridegroom, and alone!
Let us withdraw, nor mar their privacy. [*They go out.*]

Enter FERNANDO and ISOLINE.

Fern. You are right, my love; the grape is generous,
And, used in the wise proportion, cheers the heart.

Iso. You are better!—are you not?

Fern. Much!—very much!

Iso. O, blessed union that of two makes one!
Could I, dear love, have bought the world just now
By paying down for it one hearty smile,
I must have lost the bargain, seeing thee
Without one! It was otherwise before!
How often have I smiled at that same want!
But, now, come o'er your looks the slightest cloud,
All light of mine is gone.—Fernando!—Love!
Is it not sweetest partnery?

Fern. It is.

Iso. It is, indeed, my love! Say as I do!
It is, indeed, most sweet!

Fern. Indeed, it is.
Was't not the castle portal open'd now?
I know its ponderous sound! 'Tis shut again!
It was the portal!

Iso. Whom look you for, dear love?
All your good spirits gone!

Fern. No, Isoline;
Not all of them!—not half!—not any of them!
We'll spend the evening joyously, dear love!
Out-do the god of merriment himself;
And when he's out of laughter, lend him some,
And still, ourselves, hold on! Who's there?

Enter EUGENE and Others.

Eug. My lord,
We are passing to the ball-room.

Fern. Pray pass on.
And keep the measure up!

Eug. We shall, my lord. [*Going out with others*]

Fern. That's right; and so shall I!

Iso. So do! dear love!
For me!—your Isoline!—your bride!—your wife!

Fern. You are my wife!—The treasure of my heart
Is treasure of my arms! Who rich as I,
And says he is not happy? Then is he
Beyond the ministering of content,
And be despair his portion! I am not
A man like that.

Iso. My love, this cheer makes sad.

Fern. Makes sad?

Iso. It is not of the kind, gives cheer.
It wants a quiet.

Fern. Wants a quiet? Here
Lay on my brow this white and velvet hand
Thou gavest me yesterday.

Iso. It burns, dear love;
And yet how pale it is!

Fern. I have seen a man
In fever—and he burn'd, and yet was pale—
Pale as a corpse!

Iso. Thou hast no fever?

Fern. No.
The cup has pass'd too often to my lips—
Not much—only a time or two!—What proves
A spark to one, another finds a fire.
Don't heed it, dearest life!—O, what a hand!
What could be spared of it, or added to it?
Shape?—No! Hue?—No! Touch?—No! Does it breathe?
It does!

The airs of heaven! I will inhale them nearer!

[*Kissing her hand*]

Iso. You flatter, dearest lord!

Fern. No, by my love!

Iso. Yea, by your love, indeed, dear lord, you do!
You are a culprit, who for witness calls
The arch accomplice that would swear him off.

Fern. By all—[*LOUIS enters.*] Ha!—'Sdeath, you tread on
tiptoe, sir,

You are at my elbow ere I think you there!

Louis. Your pardon! I was musing, sir, and thus
Moved slow. 'Tis strange! but in the ball-room, now,
One cross'd me in a mask, and made me start,
By something in his carriage and his form
Resembling one I must have met before,

But where I cannot guess. Whoe'er it be,
A feeling of mistrust that cross'd my heart,
Assures me 'twas no friend.

Fern. What? Seem'd he old
Or young?

Louis. Men's figures do not tell their years
Well as their faces do; yet would I say,
Guessing, thereby, his progress on life's road,
He stands more near the end, than setting out.

Fern. Commanding in his air?

Louis. Very.

Fern. His gait
Of most assured tread?

Louis. Yea, as he spurn'd
The ground he walk'd on. He and I have met,
But when, or where, or upon what occasion,
I can't recall, nor till I do, can rest;
Farewell, and pardon me. 'Tis very strange!

Iso. [*To FERNANDO, who is lost in thought.*] Dear husband,
you conjecture something! What?

Fern. Nothing!

Iso. O, love, be honest!—It is best
Always.—If evil comes of it, at worst
We have been honest—That will comfort us.
Come!—I will show you, what I teach, I do.
I don't believe our union will be bless'd!
You start!—and you yourself assured me so,
And now I tell it you!—I don't believe it.
What then?—Do I repent our union? No!
My heart has had its wish—I am thy wife.
Knew I that I should die the very moment
The priest should bless us, and declare us one,
I had married thee and yielded up my spirit,
Thanking the gracious Heavens, most bountiful,
Which for that little moment made thee mine.
Then cheer thee, love; and be assured of this—
Were we to live the threescore years and ten,
And then to die, being what now we are,
We could not die more happy! Lose not now
With care for *by-and-by*, whate'er may come;
But leave't, with trust, to Heaven!

Fern. I'll do thy will!
I'll be myself!—The ball-room!—Come, love, come!

SCENE II.—A Ball-Room.

FERNANDO, ISOLINE, and Others discovered.—A Dance.

Fern. Surely the lightsomest, most graceful form,
And act of merriment! I'd give the world

To have the mood of him who danced just now.
 How he appear'd to poise him in the air,
 As he could hang there at his will, by which
 Alone he seem'd to come to earth again!
 He did not spring, but fly from step to step!
 With joints that had not freer play'd, methinks,
 Were hinges made of air and theirs were such!
 Yet could they plant themselves, I warrant me,
 To meet a shock! These spirits are fine things,
 Subtle as quicksilver; only they freeze
 Sooner than water; one cold breath, and ice!

Iso. Will you not dance?

Fern. No.

Iso. 'Tis expected, love,
 Upon your nuptial day.

Fern. I would not dance.

Iso. No more would I, dear love, to please myself;
 But we must help the mirth that's made for us,
 Else will it flag, and die. A feast, in this,
 Is like a fray, wherein the side is lost
 Whose leader is not foremost, cheering it.
 For my sake only! I must bear the blame,
 Seem you to lack content. They will believe
 That you repent you of your bargain, love.
 Would you like that?—What had you done a month
 Ago, had I refused to dance with you?
 How had you look'd as all the world were lost;
 Urged me again—again; at every turn
 Your voice yet more attuning to the tone
 That melts; invoking me in the dear name
 Of Pity and whate'er is kin to her.
 I had heard, in these things, marriage turns the tables,
 And she, that once was woo'd, must turn to woo,
 But little dream'd to find it out so soon.

Fern. Sweet love, we'll dance! Thy fair hand give to me,
 And, with it, give thy pardon.

Iso. There, Fernando.

A set!—A set!—The bride and bridegroom's set!
 Partners!—Your fair friends, gentlemen—A set
 To try the breath!—Ho, music there!—A strain
 Of brilliant figure!

[PROCIDA, in the dress of a cavalier, and masked,
 appears opposite to FERNANDO, who at once recog-
 nises him.]

Mar. Hear you, sirs? The bride
 Commands the dance—Your very newest strain,
 So 'tis the choicest, too. We are ready, madam,
 So please you take your place.

Iso. Fernando, what's
 The matter?—Who is he you gaze upon?
 Do you know him?

Fern. Don't you recollect him?

Iso. No—

Not in that mask. Who is he?

Fern. Never mind!

Iso. His presence troubles you! Whoe'er he is,
I'll have him straight removed.

Fern. Not for the world!

He wants me!

Iso. Let him wait till by-and-by!

I'll speak to him myself and pray him go,
And come some other time.

Fern. Stay, Isoline!

I would not for a mine thou spokest to him!

I'll speak to him myself!

Iso. Remember, love,

The dance is waiting.

Fern. Were't a king that waited,
He must, until I spoke to him that's yonder!
Where can I take him to?—to be alone?

Iso. The garden.

Fern. Right! When we have made an end,
By the west door he can depart unseen.

Iso. O, husband!

Fern. Let me have my way in this,
For I must! Look, love! Not surer to thy wrist
Is knit thy hand than I am knit to thee!

They cannot sever us, but I must perish!

So now, no let, love, if you value me!

Iso. Our friends, who look for us—

Fern. He looks for me!

Women, they say, are at invention quick—

Prove it so now, and never more was need;

And be my sweet apologist.

[Crosses to PROCIDA.

Say naught,

But follow me!

[PROCIDA and FERNANDO disappear among the Company.

Iso. Your pardon, friends, I pray you.

One, in some case of keenest urgency,

That needs my husband's presence, takes him hence.

Pray you proceed. I'll play the looker-on

Till he repairs his fault to you and me,

Taking his promised place. The music, there!

A Dance.

Louis. [Entering hastily.] Break off the dance!—an enemy
is here!

Lady, I have recall'd the name of him

Whose presence struck me so unwelcomely—

A foe, the subtlest and most powerful

That France could find in Sicily! When, lately,

On mission from the king I was sojourning

At the court of Spain, came thither a Sicilian

With charges foul 'gainst France, and praying aid

To second some great blow, he said, the friends
Of Sicily meditated. That same man
Is he whose presence like an apparition
Just now oppress'd me, as I told you—his name
Is John di Procida! I have alarm'd
The guard; apprised your father of his danger,
And search is now on foot, which all must join.

*[The Company at once disperse in various directions—
occasionally passing to and fro in the back-ground.]*

Iso. Ambrose!—Le Clerc! Sirs, you are men of honour.
You know me, too, a woman of that kin.
You'll do my bidding, whatsoe'er it is?

Amb. and Le Clerc. Yes; by these tokens.

[Kissing the hilts of their swords.]

Iso. Good sirs, follow me!

[They go out.]

SCENE III.—*The Garden of the Castle.*

Enter PROCIDA and FERNANDO.

Fern. Now, sir, your will with me?

Pro. That's right! I am glad
Thou dar'st not call me father! 'Tis a sign
Thou hast a sense of shame, and that's a virtue,
Although a poor one, fitter far to weep at
Than smile at. You have done your father's will?
You are ready for that oath?

Fern. I'll not deny
My disobedience, sir.

Pro. You'll not deny?
You can't!—You have married her! Yet, if my son,
Though in the one engagement thou hast fail'd,
Thou, yet, wilt keep the other.

Fern. Take that oath?
I cannot now!

Pro. You can!—You ought!—You shall!

Fern. I am a man, sir!

Pro. Ay? What kind of one?

Fern. May be a weak one; yet I dare abide
The issue of my weakness, and I will.
Not breaking trust with those, it has misled
To knit their fates to mine.

Pro. You call this manhood?

Ay, in a man not worth the name of one!
How dar'st thou prate of keeping trust to me,
With whom thou hast so vilely broken trust?
So lately, too! Thou promisedst yesterday
To bring me back my son to me! Where is he, sir?
Why must I come to seek him, and, instead,
Behold a recreant!

Fern. Better, sir, we part,

Than hold discourse on terms unequal thus,
That I must bear, alone, and you inflict.

Pro. No! We won't part! You come along with me!

Fern. Never!

Pro. As you're my son, I'll have it so!

Fern. I'll not forsake the woman of my soul,
Who to my bosom hath herself surrender'd.

Come woe! Come shame! Come ruin! True to me,
I'll not forsake her! Yea, come death, I'll clasp her
Long as my breast can heave!

Pro. You think this manhood
Again? Sir! 'tis not what a man dares do,
Nor what's expected from him by a man,
But what Heaven orders him to do,—'tis that
He should do. Heaven expects we keep its laws;
May we make league then with the foes of Heaven?
Or having made it, may we keep it? No!—
Else we shall forfeit heaven! This base alliance
Is even such a league. Break it!

Fern. No!

Pro. No?—

Listen, degenerate boy! I'll tell thee that,
In tearing which from me thou dost as bad
As though my breast thou shouldst rip open, and
Pluck out my heart alive! You never knew
A mother?

Fern. I remember there was one
Upon whose breast I used to lie.

Pro. 'Twas she.
She had a mother's breast—the heart, within,
Becoming its fair lodge—adorning it
With all the sweet affections of her sex,
And holy virtues that keep watch for them!
Thou art like her! Dost thou mark? Thou art like her now;
And so, I saw thou wast, upon her lap;
A little baby looking up at her!
Thou wast her first child, and her only one!
Thou mayst believe she loved thee!

Fern. Does she live?

Pro. No; did she live, I were not now, perhaps,
Debating with thee. Thou hadst granted her
What thou deniest me. Wouldst thou behold her?
Look here! Was that a woman?

[Drawing a miniature from his breast.

Fern. O, how fair!

Pro. Was that a woman?

Fern. Yes!

Pro. No, boy! She was
An angel!

[Putting up the miniature.

Fern. Let me look again!

[PROCIDA holds it to FERNANDO, who takes it, and
after looking at it, is about to kiss it.

Pro. Forbear!

Thou shalt not kiss it! No, nor breathe upon it!
There is contact on thy lips, at thought of which,
Had she survived the ruin of my hold,
And now were living, that sweet face, thou seest
The limning of, had to the 'haviour turn'd
Of deadly loathing!—of black horror!—aught
That's removed farthest from that smile of Heaven!
Had any mock'd that face, what were he to thee?

Fern. An enemy!

Pro. Had any smitten it?

Fern. I had lopp'd his hand off, and then smitten him
To the heart!

Pro. Had any brought the blush upon it—
The burning blush which innocence endures,
Compell'd by him who does a deed so damn'd
That murder spurns it, will not bide with it?

Fern. I had hack'd him limb from limb!—slain him by inches!

Pro. Thou hadst!

Fern. I had!

Pro. Back to the castle, then;
To the room I brought thee from, the festal room,
Where for thy nuptials they keep holiday,
And when thou meet'st the master of the mirth,
The Governor—the father of thy wife—
Him thou art now a son to—tell him—mark me!
Tell him—that very—that identical man—
He was the miscreant, to thy mother did
That very shame!—then nerve thy filial arm,
And hack him limb by limb and inch by inch,
As though in every atom lay the heart
Of the accursed spoiler.—Go!—Do that,
And then come back; and kiss thy mother's face!

Fern. I hear, and doubt I hear.

Pro. Then list again,
And doubt no more. 'Twas during a brief truce.

He was my guest—a guest's a sacred thing;

But, if he is, a host is sacred too.

Thy mother vied with me in ministering to him:

The rites of hospitality—and what

Was the return?—Such love indulged for her,

As meditated bane of life to me!

He did not dare to breathe it—he but look'd it!

She saw what troubled her, and like a wife

Perfect in honour—of herself best guardian—

At once refused her presence on some plea

That ward'd chance of quarrel, while it balk'd

Licentiousness of opportunity.

This when the truce was ended, told she me.

Dost thou breathe thick?—I do, and must take breath,

For what's to come. You listen, do you not?

You look like stone!

Fern. I know not what I am! —

Pro. Well! — War again. — Where was your father? —

Where

Behoves a loyal subject be—in the ranks
Of the king when he takes the field.—You know we lost
The day. Palermo, Syracuse, Messina,
All bent the knee to the conqueror. Was I
His subject? No!—Was I a rebel to him?
No!—Why then should I be proscribed?

Fern. Proscribed!

Pro. I was so!—Keep thy wonder! What's behind
Will want it. Through the arts of that same man—
Of him that's now thy father through thy union
With his pernicious child—was thy *own* father
Proscribed. Have patience! His possessions cast
At the feet of a licentious soldiery
To scramble for and ravage.

Fern. Infamy!

Pro. I say again have patience. “Infamy!”
No, not at all—not worth a passing frown,
The deed's to come. My castle yet remain'd;
That, the arch-spoiler to himself reserved
For plunder—for thy mother shelter'd there!
She was the quarry which this bird of prey
Had mark'd out for his pounce—which, when he saw,
'Twas sure, he made!—swept down with ruthless wing,
When none was near to cleave him ere he struck,
Or scare him from his prey! Do you hear a shriek?

Fern. Sir?

Pro. Do you hear a shriek?

Fern. No.

Pro. Are you sure?

Fern. I am; for never do I hear a shriek
But my heart leaps as through my breast 'twould burst
Its way! I cannot bear to hear a shriek!

Pro. Thou heard'st thy mother's! as the ravisher
Waved o'er thy head his coward blade, through terror
At thy impending death, to win from her,
What, sooner than yield up, she had lost, herself,
A hundred thousand lives!—She swoon'd away
My heart turns sick, and my brain reels! Thy arm!
Away! thou worse than matricide—Thy touch
With a new horror strings my nerves anew!

Fern. Why was this tale reserved?—not told before?

Pro. Because I found thee apt, as I believed,
In taking up the hint of honour; nor
Admitted fear it could be thrown away.
Life's strong in me to tell the tale and live!
How she contrived escape, to tell it me,
It matters not—the last word cost her dear—

'Twas bought with her last breath.—You come with me?

Fern. I am a doom'd man!—My lot, on earth,

Is cast in utter misery!—For me,
Not in the wide world blooms that blessed spot
I can find comfort in!

Pro. Find Duty, boy;
And take thy chance for comfort!

Fern. I can't leave her!

Do wrong to her, did ever good to me!
I took her for all chance, and through all chance

I'll cleave to her! In cloud I wedded her,
And thunder shall not scare me from her now!

No blame is hers.—I swear that she is good.

Loves holily as heartily. Is a gem

Of crystal truth—a mine of every ore

Of excellence—a paragon of worth,

Well as a paragon of loveliness!

Is she her father's hand or foot, that you

Or I should spurn her for her father's fault?

High Heaven framed her, as it frames us all,

Not of the temper of our parentage,

But of the attributes itself vouchsafes us.

Heaven framed her to be loved—if to be loved,

Then, cherish'd!—I have sworn to cherish her—

I'll keep my oath!—I will not give her up.

Pro. Then, must I leave thee to thy fate!

Iso. [*Entering.*] Stop, sir!

You are John of Procida!

Pro. I am.

Iso. The foe

Of France; and, chiefly, of a son of hers

Who calls me child.

Pro. I am the foe of France,

And chiefly foe of him thou speakest of.

Iso. What madness brought thee hither?

Pro. Madness?—Right!

Hope of reclaiming a degenerate son,

Spell-bound by love where it behoves him loathe!

Iso. Your life's in jeopardy!—You are discover'd!

Come in there!—Gentlemen, you'll guard him safely,

And suffer none to question him or touch him;

Nor must you leave him till he is thoroughly

Beyond the reach of danger.

Pro. Gracious powers!

Do you rebuke me?—is it thus you show it?

Iso. You are my enemy—and yet my father!

Father to him—to me a dearer self!

I'll answer with my life, sir, for the safety

Of every hair of your head.

Pro. Fernando!

Fern. Sir?

Pro. Come hither!—Lady, place your hand in mine.

These hands that met, till now, against my will,

Now, with my will, I join, and add thereto

My blessing!—May I, Heaven?—I ask too late!
'Tis done!—A promise, lady!

Iso. It is given!

Pro. See that it be fulfill'd. You will repair
To-night, ere at the zenith stops the moon,
There, westward of Messina, on the coast,
Where, when the waves and winds are boisterous,
The fishermen their little fleets embay,
And, in their snug huts nestling at their ease,
Smile and grow jocund at the storm without.
You know the place?

Iso. I do—I will be there!

Pro. And so will I—and you shall find a friend!

[*They go out severally.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Bay near Messina.—The Sea.—Fishermen's Boats; in the offing a Fleet.—Moonlight.*

Enter JOHN OF PROCIDA and GUISCARDO.

Pro. You look your news! 'Tis dire, but not unwelcome,
Nor out of place nor out of season, that
Men should cry "God forbid!"—That is, *good* men.
It is the scourging, at report of which,
Men, that rely on Heaven, upon their breasts
Will cross their arms, though shuddering, and look up,
In dread, yet gratitude. Chance has outdone
Foresight; and Preparation, looking on
With idle hands, can scarce believe its eyes
To see the work, it labour'd for, fulfill'd
Almost without its aid. Tell me again
The cause and manner of the massacre;
And leisurely. What you related now
Seems like a dream, which he that has awaked from't
Tries to recall, but finds the substance vapour,
Which in the tracing of it—vanishes!
You said, the hour of the vespers?

Guis. Yes; that hour,
That annual hour religiously observed
In Sicily, our tyrants made a plea
For new and worse aggression. On pretence
Our act of piety might mask revolt,
Assembling in such numbers; though we held
Our warrants in our hands, our wives and children,
Which, who that loved them, would to strokes expose
From swords and knives in sudden tumult drawn,
Where rage might miss a foe and smite a friend?

Pro. Well, upon this pretence, orders, you said,
Were pass'd to search for arms—

Guis. O Heaven, the acts
Of an unbridled soldiery—of men
Who reckon war a game—regarding all
The charities—the tender charities
Of human life—as stakes!—Interpreting
This order by the hint of most depraved
And devilish appetite, the myrmidons
Of France presented to amazed Palermo,
O'er-acted in her streets, exposure, which
Her liberal haunts keep close—attested by
The shrieks of maids and matrons, powerless
With loathing and affright; whose friends look'd on,
Aghast with rage that knew not where to turn.

Pro. Go on!—I see it!

Guis. Know you one Venoni,
The son of Nicolo Venoni?

Pro. No;

But knew his father well.

Guis. He married lately,
And his young bride, accompanying him
To church, was thus encounter'd. Now Venoni,
That kind of spirit is endow'd with, which,
If once 'tis chafed, serves its own impulse solely,
Reckless of cost. As a high-temper'd horse
That's rashly given the spur, throws off all guidance
Save that of its own fury; spikes itself
Upon a palisade, plunges into
A flood, or dashes o'er a precipice
As soon as keep the road. With naked hand
He struck the caitiff down!

Pro. 'Twas like the son
Of his father!—'Twas well done!

Guis. How one brave man
Showing himself will make a thousand brave
That play'd the hound before! The iniscrant
At once was stoned to death. His fellows, seeing,
For the first time, how, more from habitude
Than proper power, a handful sways a crowd,
To save themselves took straight to flight. And now
The uproar!—While the guard the laram beat,
The citizens—the women and their fry
Huddling into their houses, without heed
Whether their own or neighbours', and, as freely,
Such weapons snapping up as came to hand—
Trebled in numbers from the rousing cry
Of the exploit, which ran like wildfire through
The city, shouting for Enfranchisement,
Vengeance, and Freedom, towards the citadel,
Devoted, moved—one street of waving arms!

Pro. The sight appall'd their enemies!

Guis. It did!

Pro. No monster half so dire as that which meets

The eye of tyranny, when it beholds
Its thralls make stand against it, all at once,
While at its foot it thought them ! They o'erthrew
The garrison ?

Guis. O'erthrew ?—Ay, did they, sir,
As the red flood of Etna would a wall
With touching it. Then came the Massacre,
'Mid yells for quarter, answer'd by despair.
The strugglings then—the blows—the kinds of death !
Some falling by a single stroke, and some
By none at all but grasp of strangling horror.
By pieces some despatch'd—gash upon gash—
Their bodies hack'd, yet life without a wound.
How variously they met their fate—some mad,
Some as all sense were lapsed, some seeking it—
Some flying from it ; and with all the signs
As the blood works in such extremity !
Some, pale as ashes ; some, with face on fire ;
Some, black as though with premature congealing !
Here tears ; there scowls ; there laughter—yes, I saw,
Some that did die with laughter ! Some did groan,
Some groan'd, some shriek'd. Most died with curses. Few
With prayers, and they were mix'd with imprecations.
More than one wretch, thrust through and through, that
laugh'd
With simulated bravery, masking despair !
Not one encounter'd death with constancy ;
But most as, to its pangs, were superadded
The sharper stings of conscience.

Pro. Heaven have mercy
Upon their souls !

Guis. Their wives and children, now—

Pro. Don't tell me that again ! I shudder still !
The work of slaughter should have stopp'd at *them* !
Woman and infancy have Nature's word
Against the blows of men, whom she made strong
For their protection ! It is damage done,
Irreparable to a righteous cause ;
Which, else, all men, contemporary with it,
As well as all to come, had wholly lauded.
It is a glorious page in history,
So blotted, men will say of it, hereafter,
As well as now, " Better it ne'er were written ! "

Guis. Nay, John of Procida, that friend whose zeal
Despatch'd me to you, and your trust in whom
Made him the master of your hiding-place—
For, it behoved you, being what you are,
The friend of Sicily, like a wild beast
To house !—that friend, with other thoughts than yours
Beheld the work of vengeance. In the midst
His voice was loudest, " Death to all that's French !
Spare not—nor sex—nor age ! "

Pro. I love the zeal,
But hate the excess.

Guis. Think 'twas the lava, sir;
And had it been, what then would you have said?
But, that it was the hand of Heaven, stretch'd forth,
Most righteously. For when was mercy shown,
To us or ours, by them? To say no more,
Our sisters, wives, and daughters, with their cheeks
Burning at shames, which, thought of, drives us mad,
Cried for atonement not one tittle short
Of that which we exacted! Be prepared.
Palermo marches on Messina. Not
A minute but she's nearer, by the strides
Impatient vengeance takes, with first success,
Flush'd and invigorated! You are look'd for,
As soul and limb of the enterprise. Beware,
The fire you wish to blaze, you put not out,
By damping it. For me, my sword abstains
From nothing that owns kindred with the blood
Whose pestilent poison, worse than pestilence,
Has cursed my native land! Look to yourself,
Fernando! [*Rushes out.*]

Pro. By that name they call my son!
Is he devoted? Friend!—No! Let me think!
No; better I remove him from the rage
I might in vain attempt to mitigate;
They shall depart together. Who goes there?
Francisco?

Enter FRANCISCO [a Sailor].

Fran. Yes.

Pro. You keep your time. Where lies
The boat?

Fran. In the shade of yonder jutting rock
On which the moonbeam strikes.

Pro. 'Tis well. When those,
With whom I mean to freight her, shall arrive,
I'll summon you; when they are safe bestow'd,
Pull for the fleet, right to the Admiral's ship.
Away and watch. [*FRANCISCO goes.*] Nature forebodes a shock.
She is not herself, but motionless and still,
Like one that holds his breath with strong suspense!
Etna seems dead, as though her fires were out.
At morn, I watch'd her; and, again, at noon;
At sunset, last; I could not see a reek;
No, not so much as the light gauzy wreath
Shook from the veil which vaporous night hath left,
And morning, lifting with his glowing hand,
Melts, as he touches, into viewless air!
Charybdis holds her peace and Scylla sleeps!
The welkin does not stir! A heaviness,
Stillness, and silence, all unwonted, and

Portentous, hold possession of the world
As on the eve of some dread prodigy!

FERNANDO and ISOLINE enter.

Fern. Who is there?

Pro. A friend.

Fern. My father?

Pro. Yes, my son.

You are come in time. Methinks not yet the moon
Has topp'd the hill of night. How is it, lady?
You seem to droop?

Iso. 'Tis very sultry, sir.

I never felt the like. There's not a breath.

Pro. No; not a breath, indeed. 'Tis a deep calm.
Wilt trust me, lady, as a friend?

Iso. I will!

As better than a friend—a father, sir—
The father of my husband!—By that title
In a brief hour almost as much endear'd
As he who call'd me daughter all my life!

Pro. A most sweet nature! Slaughter shall not force
The house of such a heart. Fernando!

Fern. Sir?

Pro. Anon a storm will burst upon Messina
More fierce than ever yet the elements
In wildest fury bred. Do you see a cloud?

Fern. No.

Pro. Understand me, then.

Fern. I understand you!

Pro. It brings no squall, no bolt, yon fleet need fear.
There you shall house to-night—your bride as well.

Fern. My father—

Pro. Peace!—Believe I love you, lady;
Not that I say so, but that I will show you
The deeds of love. Behoves it, though, at present,
You give me credit on my word alone,
And largely, too.

Iso. To what amount you will.

Provided, should you fail—and that, I am sure,
Would be the shame of fortune and not yours,—
My losses only light upon myself!

Pro. 'Tis frankly answer'd. Frankly, then, thus far
Give me your confidence on trust, alone;
To change, to-night, your lodging for a berth
On board a barque that rides in yonder fleet,
Whereof the chief bears me a brother's love,
Which I, alike, return. Hard by, there waits
A boat, and he that holds your hand e'en now,
And has most right to it of all the world,
Shall go along with you.

Fern. O father, thanks!

Iso. For what, dear husband? Those were hearty thanks!

Such payment waits not on small benefits.
 What heavy debt do you and I incur
 By sleeping, love, on board yon fleet to-night,
 That you acknowledge it so largely?

Fern. Nay!

Question not, sweet! but come!

Iso. Nay; by your leave,
 I'll think, a little, first. The thanks you pay
 Mind me of thanks which I myself do owe
 And ought to pay as well as you.—Did we lodge
 With a mere friend—a friend of every day—
 The common'st friend—we would not leave his house
 Without "Good-bye and thank you." I have lived
 With a good friend of mine for twenty years—
 One that still made me feel his house my own;
 As welcome to it every bit as much
 As he himself!—Should I treat such a friend
 Worse than I would a friend of every day?
 No, love.—I'll go.—But you and I must bid
 "Good-bye and thank you" to my father first.

Pro. [*Aside.*] That note now jars the tune that late ran
 sweet!

Iso. What is't offends your father, that he frowns
 And moves with step disturb'd? What angers him?
 I see! I see!—I must return to mine.

Fern. It may not be!

Iso. Nay, by your leave, it must!
 And say it must, dear love! Oh, make me not
 The thing I would not be—a froward wife.
 'Tis time enough for that—if e'er that come,
 Which, I'll be bound, 'twill never, with my will.
 I would not for a thousand thousand worlds
 Gainsay you, any time, and chiefly now,
 Just when I have paid my freedom down for you.
 Oh, be a gentle master to me, love!
 Don't overtask me, lest the duty, which
 'Twere sweetness to discharge, grows weariness,
 And I should cast the heavy burden down
 I lack the strength to bear.

Fern. This once be ruled!

Only this once, and I'll obey you, love,
 For all my life to come! Give you command,
 And try to overtask me, if you will,
 And see if I complain—much less, rebel.
 Bear with me only now!

Iso. I will not, love,
 Unless I know the reason; and when known,
 Approve of it! Husband, deal fair with me.
 Is't fit I do the thing my soul condemns?
 How may it fare with you? Is she a wife
 Who, as a daughter, fails? She cannot be!
 Duty is uniform where duty is,

And can no more with disobedience bide
Than honesty with fraud. Am I not right?
Am I the guardian of your honour, love?
Ay, before any one!—before yourself!
Then, by myself, must I approve the trust,
And make fidelity my law in all things.
I'll see my father ere I seek yon fleet,
Or know the reason why I must not see him,
And find that reason right.

Pro. Yet more and more
It turns to discords!—Girl! your husband's life
Depends on your obeying him.

Iso. Does mine?

Pro. Yes.

Iso. And my father's, too?—I'll answer—No!
I comprehend. Some storm that's gathering
Around my father, you would save me from;
And, to that end, would lead me to forsake him.
Forsake my father!—Sir, are you a father
To counsel so a child? Is this the ruin
You told me of, and would have left me to,
Fernando?—but you did not leave me!—No!—
You were mine own love still! Sir, have you rule
Over the wind that brings this thunder-cloud,
Divert it! Think how merciful is Heaven,
And copy it! My father is your foe,
But spare him—I spared you!

Pro. I would return
Your bounty, would you let me.

Iso. Could I let you,
On terms like yours, I were unworthy of it!
Plead for my father! Will you not, Fernando?
Do it!—He was a father, love, to you!

Pro. Do it, and think upon your mother, boy!
Are you a man?—The boat lies round the rock;
There stands your wife; destruction is at hand.
Seize her and snatch her from it!

Iso. If he dares!
'Twould make me hate him!—Yes, Fernando—love
Can turn to e'en as opposite a thing
As hate!—ay, in a moment!—Do not try it!

Pro. Listen, and learn the fate that threatens you,
And I would save you from! The men that were
But yesterday the spaniels of the French,
To-day are bloodhounds that eat up their masters.
Palermo knows it! Of thy country, all,
That late drew breath in her, have proved it—Man
Woman, and Child! The rule is Massacre!
And now the dogs, mad with the game of blood,
Hark hither to repeat it.—There they are!

Iso. Where?

Pro. Don't you hear?

Iso. I do!—a distant sound.

Pro. It is their yelping as they speed along
On foam with haste and fury. Save your wife!

Iso. Fernando, touch your wife and she's a corpse!
Make but the offer and she slays herself!

Which is the way?—Point out the way to me—
The way to my father!—Sirs, which is the way?

Pro. They'll intercept you ere you reach the town!

Iso. Were it the lava that came boiling on,
I'd cross it to my father!

Pro. You forget
Your husband!

Iso. He is safe—my father not:
I now am wife to danger!

Fern. Isoline!

Iso. Ha!—Yes!—There 'tis!—That light—O blessed light!
Blest though 'tis shining from a tomb!—I greet it
As never did I yet the rising sun. [*Rushes out.*]

Pro. [*Stopping FERNANDO.*] Whither, my boy?

Fern. Father, to bring her back,
Or share her fate!

Pro. Fernando!

Fern. Better die
Than live—and, honour dead—nay, manhood dead—
Still bear thy name, living of all mankind
The execration! Farewell, father!

Pro. Stop!

Embrace me ere you go!

Fern. [*Struggling with PROCIDA.*] Nay, father!

Pro. Nay,

But I *will* hold thee, boy!

Fern. She vanishes!

I have lost sight of her!—O, loose thy hold!

Pro. I cannot part with thee!

Fern. She will escape me!

Pro. What! is my strength gone from me?—Is my child
Stronger than I?—Can I believe I have dwindled
While he has grown to brawn!

Fern. [*Bursting away.*] Farewell!

Pro. He is gone!

And I am desolate in the world again!
O, the fine nature, there, that's run to waste!

Hark!—They are near the town.—Why, Procida,
Where is thy cause?—that which was wife, son, all

On earth most dear to thee? Who roused the spirit
That leads the march of death in progress, now?

Thou!—Where thy post then?—Here, or at its head,
Directing it? Forgive me, Sicily,

Forgive me, martyr-king!—and, Liberty,
Disown me not; I ever was thy son!

Away the private care! The public cause

Engross the heart, I once gave up to it,
 And now give up again! Quail, Tyranny!
 Up, Freedom!—Claim your rights—and have them, too!
 [Goes off.]

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in the Castle. Loud knocking outside, repeated two or three times.*

Enter from the opposite side AMBROSE hastily.

Amb. Give o'er!—What makes you knock so loud? Come in! [Opens.]

Louis. [Entering.] The Governor!

Amb. He sleeps.

Louis. Awaken him!

Amb. Must I?—Till now he has not tasted rest;
 His mind distemper'd by unquiet thoughts,
 Things of no substance—visions, which his fancy
 Has conjured up to cheat his senses with.
 Gazing on air, as 'twere endued with form,
 Sinews and motion; and with silence holding
 Discourse, as it could hear, and had a tongue;
 Sleep hath but new composed him; I am loth
 To abridge her friendly visit.

Louis. Better thou
 Than death! Messina swarms on every hand
 With signs of ferment. Ere the custom'd hour,
 The citizens forsake their couches, for
 The scarcely lighted streets; and frequent pass
 From house to house, or here and there in groups
 Stand muttering to one another; while
 On our patrols, for whom they scarce make way,
 Instead of looks of deprecation, scowls
 They cast, that talk of blood as openly
 As threats of murder. Something is on foot
 Which instant harsh example may suppress,
 Where to we wait the will of the Governor.

Amb. I'll call him then,—Soft,—he is here! Observe,
 Attired as yesterday, rejecting all
 The appliances of sleep!

Gov. [Entering.] I am the dupe
 Of mine own fancy, and I know it; yet
 I am its dupe! My reason giveth way.
 I come from my own chamber, where I stood
 Just now in the hall of John of Procida!
 I knew 'twas my own chamber, yet it seem'd
 His hall; and at the further end there sat
 His wife, or else a spectre in her shape.
 She did not breathe, methought, and yet she sat
 Her chair erect, and saw; and glared at me
 Until her eyeballs froze me. I come out

Into my antechamber. I am here!—
 I am sure I am!—Still seem I standing yet
 In that abhorred hall with that companion
 Of aspect most unnatural, that makes
 My flesh to creep and breathing grow so thick
 I doubt 'tis air I draw!

Louis. He dreams, although
 He seems awake.

Amb. No—no!—He does not dream!
 It is not dreams men see with open eyes.
 This mood hath grown upon him since he heard
 Of John of Procida. My lord—my lord!

Gov. O, Ambrose, is it you? I am glad you are here.

Amb. I am, my lord; and here is Louis too,
 Who dreads some ferment in Messina. Scarce
 'Tis dawn, and yet the citizens have left
 Their beds, and throng the streets with sullen looks,
 Threatening disaster to their masters, which
 To avert, behoves we force them to keep house,
 And make, of the resisting, sharp example.

Gov. Take measures as occasion calls for them,
 Arouse the garrison. Let one and all
 Be under arms. Shed no more blood than's needed.

[*LOUIS goes out.*]

No news of John of Procida! The face
 He saw not; 'twas the figure only struck him;
 Recalling the impression of a man
 He once had seen, but where he could not tell,
 Nor who it was, till he at last bethought him
 Of John of Procida, then told his thought
 Not as a thing of doubt but certainty.
 And then the disappearance all at once
 Of him he so remark'd, was circumstance
 Corroborative. Ever since, my heart
 Hath felt a chill like that the body feels
 When cold hath smit it to the bone! so deep,
 No art medicinal can draw it out,
 And the wretch shivers at the very fire!

Amb. He is forgetful I am near him. Mark.

Gov. Hangs then my fate on John of Procida?
 My heart forebodes it does. Forebodes it right?
 If so, when he's at hand, my doom is near.
 Ha! as I live 'tis gone. Spectre and all!
 O! now I see you, Ambrose. Who comes yonder?
 Is't not Le Clerc?

Amb. I'd say it was, my lord,
 But for those marks of blood! He spent last night
 Some two miles distant from Messina.

Enter LE CLERC, supported by MARTEL and a Soldier.

Martel. Here's
 Le Clerc come wounded home. He threw himself

From his horse into our arms, and without word,
Made for the staircase, which he stagger'd up,
As if by superhuman effort, and
Made straight for your highness' chamber.

Gov. Well, Le Clerc?

What would you with me, friend? What has befallen you?
He strives to speak, but cannot. Voice is fled,
And life is following it. One word, Le Clerc.
He dies in the attempt.—Yes; he is dead!
Remove him. Good Martel, be on the alert.
Arouse our friends. Look to the citizens!

[*MARTEL and the others go out, bearing the body between them.*]

Of some dread visitation this must be
The dark, but sure, forerunner. Death is abroad.
Be sure of it. Yes, Ambrose, death is abroad!
Death!—Death!

Louis. [*Entering hastily.*] My lord, the sentinels upon
The walls hear sounds as of a multitude
Advancing on Messina. Scouts are sent;
What it behoves us look for, we shall learn
A few brief minutes hence.

Gov. Brief, do you say?
Years are not brief, and minutes now are years!
What of the citizens?

Louis. Their numbers swell.
They move in masses up and down the city,
Returning dogged silence to our orders
To clear the streets. We wait for augmentation
To drive them into their houses. List, my lord,
Our trumpets sound to arms.

Enter FRANÇOIS, conducting PIERRE, much exhausted.

Gov. Ay, lustily
They tell their need. What other spectre this?
Who is't? He is ours, and yet I know him not.
Who is't, I say?

Fran. One from Palermo, sir,
Whose speed has cost him his good courser's life
To bring unwelcome news.

Gov. What tells it, friend?

Pierre. The massacre of every living soul
Of Gallic birth or blood, that in Palermo
Drew breath the day on which I 'scaped from it,
Preserved by feigning death!

Martel. [*Rushing in.*] A whelming flood—
A whelming human flood—comes raging on
Right for Messina. Haste, sirs! Massacre
Is at our very gates. Flight is cut off.
Resistance is our only hope. Forth!—Forth!
Houses are certain tombs!

[*All go out but the GOVERNOR, who seems transfixed.*]

Gov. 'Tis Procida!
 'Tis Vengeance!—Vengeance without mercy!—fierce!—
 Implacable! On every side the sword!
 I cannot hope to live—yet cannot die!
 Flight—flight—the coward's refuge! Nothing else
 Is left me! This way leads into the street!
 The garden? Yes, it opes without the walls;
 Conscience, 'tis thou, not I!—Except for thee
 I would not quail!—The spectre here again!
 Again the hall of John of Procida!
 Away!—Flight!—Nothing else!—Away!—Away!
 [Rushes out.]

SCENE THE LAST.—*The Garden of the Castle.*

Enter ISOLINE, tottering and breathless—She leans against a tree—Sounds of tumult without, and the noise of martial instruments.

Iso. Thus far in time—thus far in safety! Were't
 Another stride, ere take it I had dropp'd.
 The work is going on! O, spare my father—
 Spare him, and deal with me! Hark! Massacre
 Has left this quarter free; within the city
 Holding her gory reign. She does not riot
 Within the castle yet. He yet may live!
 Limbs, hold me up. Don't fail me. Who comes here?
 My father!—Father! [GOVERNOR enters hastily and wildly.]

Gov. Whosoe'er thou art,
 Stop not my way!

Iso. Dost thou not know me?

Gov. No!

In times like these men know not one another.
 Holding together, they together fall,
 As men in knots will drown. In scattering lies
 The chance of safety. Do not hold me, friend!
 Let go!—Look to thyself!—Let every one
 Look to himself. He is lost that casts his eye
 Upon another's jeopardy. His own
 Asks all his care.—Let go!—Away!—Away!
 [Rushes off.]

Iso. [Thrown upon her knees.] He does not know me!—He's
 my father, and
 He does not know me! He's distracted—mad!
 Fain would I follow him, but cannot.—No,
 My knees refuse to raise me.

Fern. [Rushing in.] Isoline!

Iso. [Springing up by a convulsive effort, and throwing herself
 into his arms.] Fernando!—my Fernando!—True to
 death!

My husband—Mine own love!—I die for joy!
 And bless thee, my Fernando, for my death!

[Swoons in his arms]

Fern. Love!—Wife!—Choice pattern of thy devoted sex—
My Isoline! She is dead!—she is dead!—she is dead!

Guis. [*Entering from the castle, his sword drawn.*] Fernando!

Fern. Here, Guiscardo!

Guis. Who is she

Hangs swooning on thine arm? Thy bride?

Fern. My bride!

Guis. And dead?

Fern. And dead!

Guis. Set down the carrion, then,
And yield me payment for Martini's death!

I want not odds!—I'll fight thee like a man

For ancient friendship's sake!

Fern. Fight me, Guiscardo?

Guis. Cast down thy load to earth, and draw thy sword.

Fern. Wouldst murder me?—and if thou wouldst, Guis-

cardo,

Do it at once!

Guis. I'd treat thee like a man.

Wilt thou not throw thyself thy burden down,

And act like one, or must I wrest it from thee

To balk thee of excuse?

[*Approaching.*]

Fern. You touch her not!

'Fore her dead body do I throw my life

That would not save my own!

Guis. Have at thee, then!

[*They fight; FERNANDO is wounded.*]

And. [*Rushing in.*] Hold!—'Tis the son of John of Procida!

Guis. The son of John of Procida!

Fern. Too late!

Take her! Preserve from insult—Pay all honours,—

For her sake, not for mine, and lay us side

By side. I pant for death, and not the life,

Would hold my spirit from rejoining hers!

[*Dies.*]

Enter JOHN OF PROCIDA.

Pro. It is not there!—I came to see his corse,

But not to smite him. No!—I would not stain

This day of freedom with the narrow deed

Of personal vengeance.—To the swords of others

I would have left him, satisfied if they

The debt exacted that was due to mine.

But they, intent on their own quarry, mine

Have suffer'd to escape, and vengeance, now

Balk'd, by its own remissness, of its prey,

Grashes the teeth in vain!

And. Di Procida!

Pro. Ho!—Andrea! What bear'st thou on thy arm?

And. The body of Fernando's wife, although

If this be death, I much mistake its hue!

Pro. Who lies upon the ground? The Governor?

And. Thy son, O Procida!—She is not dead!
Help here!—Hold off!—You kill'd him!

Pro. Kill'd my son!

Guis. Strike, John of Procida! He sided with
The enemies of Sicily.

Pro. He did;

And he was born her son! Live!—You did right.
His father says it.—Yet, he was my son!

Guis. I knew not that.

Pro. And had you known it, still
You had done right—I say it—I—his father!
And yet he was my son!

Iso. [*Recovering.*] My lord!—My husband!—
Fernando!—draw me closer to thy breast!
Hold off!—Who art thou?—Where's Fernando?—Who
Is that?

And. Fernando's father!

Iso. So it is!

And we are safe!—Art we not, sir? [*Tottering toward JOHN.*]

Pro. O, Fate!

Iso. You will not let them murder us?—You will not!
You can't! else Nature have no truth in her,
And never more be trusted!—Never more!
If fathers will not stretch an arm to save
Their children's throats, let mothers' breasts run dry,
And infants at the very founts of life
Be turn'd to stones! Sir!—Father!—Where's your son?
Ah, you repulse me not! You let me come
Closer to you.—Where's my Fernando, father?
What! do you draw me to you?—Would you take me
Into your very bosom?—There, then!

[*Throws her arms about his neck.*]

Now,

Fernando, what's to fear?—Now, mine own love,
We shall be happy!—happy!—blessed happy!
Why don't you answer me?—Where is he, father?
I left him here! Where I have been I know not.
I recollect a sickness as of death,
And now it comes again. My brow grows chill
And damp—I'll wipe it! Blood!—What brings it here?
Whose blood is this?

And. Blood has been shed to-day.
No vestment in Messina, but you'll find
Some trace upon't.

Iso. Where is my husband, sirs?
Is this Fernando's blood?—We were together,
And it was here!—and if death threaten'd us,
He would be close to me, of his own life
Making a shield for mine! Was he alive,
Were he not here?—Not here, he must be dead!
And this must be his blood!

Pro. Remove her, friend;

Take and remove her hence. I lack the strength.
 Her plight, to mine own added, weighs me down.
 She must not sec his body; 'tis her life
 That I feel fluttering next my breast just now
 As ready to take wing. 'Twere certain death
 To look upon him.

Iso. [*To ANDREA.*] No, I will not hence!
 They will murder me. I am safe here,—am I not?
 Am I not, father? Father!—Where's my father?
 He did not know me!—Shook off his daughter!
 Fled from her!—You are all my father now!
 But there's Fernando, too!—You are not weeping?
 You are!—Don't weep!—I'll dry your eyes for you!
 The blood again!

Pro. We must remove her hence.
 Come with me, child.

Iso. Child!—Do you call me child?
 Child is a sweet name!

Pro. Come, my daughter.

Iso. Daughter!
 That's sweeter yet than child. Nothing so sweet
 After the name of wife; but wife's not sweeter
 Than husband.—Husband? That's the sweetest name
 Of all! My husband is your son! and "son"—
 There is a sweet name too!—No sweeter name
 Than son! Do you not think so?

Pro. Come.

Iso. I come!

We are going to Fernando,—are we not?
 Sir, fare you well. What's that upon the ground?

And. Where?

Iso. There! You know as well as I! Stand off!

[*Breaks away.*]

Fernando!—My Fernando! Dead?—Ay, dead
 Indeed, when it is I that call, and thou
 Return'st no answer!—My Fernando!—Dead!
 Ah! it is well! Here's silence coming too
 For me, love!—Yes, I feel the frost of death
 Biting my limbs, and creeping towards my heart.
 Colder and colder—all will soon be ice.

'Tis winter ere its time! but welcome, since
 'Tis shared with you, Fernando. Mercy, Heaven,
 'Tis kind—'tis pitiful to suffer me

On thy dead lips to breathe my life away. [*Dies.*]

And. Let me conduct thee hence, O Procida!

Grief hath benumb'd his every faculty.

Steph. [*Entering with others.*] Where is John of Procida?

And. Behold him.

Steph. Health

To thee and to Messina! which, to-day,
 Through thee, beholds her grievous yoke thrown off.
 All Sicily is free! From north to south,

From east to west she garrisons herself,
And tyrants rule no more!

And. Forgive him that
He heeds you not. The body is his son's,
You see him gazing on!

Steph. We know his heart!

Thomaso. [*Entering with others.*] Health, John of Procida!

The enemy

That sack'd thy castle, and who yesterday
Held rule in Sicily, the Governor,
Flying from death, encounter'd it from one—
Who knew him, intercepted him, and slew him.

And. All enmities, all loves, are swallow'd up
In the deep gulf of sorrow for his son.

Carlo. [*Entering with others.*] Where is our chief?

And. You see what's left of him.

Carlo. The admiral

And captains of the fleet have disembark'd
To swell the general joy; and, yonder, come
Our ancient magistrates, their offices
Suspended long, resumed, to pay their debts
To John of Procida!

Enter Magistrates, &c.

Chief Magistrate. Di Procida

The Liberator—so we hail thee—such
Thy deeds declare thee better than our words!
For us and for our children from our hands—
Whose act our sovereign master will approve—
Most poor return take for most rich desert,
And be the Governor of Sicily!

[*The whole assembly shout and applaud.*—*JOHN OF PROCIDA weeps.*

Pro. Forgive me—I'm a father!—There's my son!

END OF JOHN OF PROCIDA.

OLD MAIDS:

(ORIGINALLY BY JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES) A Comedy,

IN FIVE ACTS.

TO

ROBERT DICK, ESQ.,

OF

LOCH-ARD LODGE, NEAR ABERFOYLE, BY STIRLING,

This Comedy

IS AFFECTIONATELY AND GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

BY

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

October, 1841.

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN IN 1841.)

<i>Sir Philip Brilliant</i>	Mr. C. MATHEWS.
<i>Master Blount</i>	Mr. F. MATTHEWS.
<i>John Blount</i>	Mr. HARLEY.
<i>Thomas Blount</i>	Mr. G. VANDENHOFF.
<i>Robert</i>	Mr. W. LACEY.
<i>Bernard</i>	Mr. AYLIF.
<i>Harris</i>	Mr. HONNER.
<i>Stephen</i>	Mr. W. PAYNE.
<i>Jacob</i>	Mr. WIGAN.
<i>William</i>	Mr. KERRIDGE.
<i>Lady Blanche</i>	Madame VESTRIS.
<i>Lady Anne</i>	Mrs. NISBET.
<i>Mistress Blount</i>	Mrs. W. WEST.
<i>Charlotte</i>	Mrs. HUMBY.
<i>Jane</i>	Miss LEE.

OLD MAIDS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Room in SIR PHILIP BRILLIANT'S House.*

Enter BERNARD and HARRIS.

Har. What time to-morrow?

Ber. At noon, I told thee, he sets off. Be thou forthcoming an hour before at the latest; and mind no item be wanting. We lack leisure for mistakes.

Har. I shall be careful. How takes he this route to Ireland?

Ber. As he takes everything—with an even temper.

Har. He goes not there to sleep.

Ber. No; when he ought to be awake—but he will lose no wink of rest that a proper man should profit by; no more than he will step aside to avoid watching, toil, or peril; which he will share with the meanest soldier in his regiment. Sir Philip Brilliant is a butterfly in the drawing-room, but a man in the field. His nature is of the true stuff! He is a blade of proof in a dainty scabbard; you may laugh at the scabbard, but you won't at the blade.

Har. And takes he this expedition so coolly?

Ber. Coolly?—Judge of the fever it throws him into, when I tell you he has been occupied this hour past in trying on a new suit, with which he means to affront all comparison to-day, for its fashion and splendour. Let us be gone. Here he comes.

Har. And with him Master Robert, his valet. What a pleasant incontinent rogue that Master Robert is!

Ber. Ay, but a frank one, and honest withal—a rogue for the humour only.

Har. I will tell you a trick he played me.

Ber. Nay; if you begin with his tricks, there will never be an end.

Har. But I must tell thee.

Ber. Well; be it as we pass to the door, then. Quick! They are here.

[BERNARD and HARRIS go out.]

Enter SIR PHILIP and ROBERT.

Sir Phil. Now, Robert—for I know you have an eye—Examine me. Scan me from head to foot And round about, and say how fits my dress,

And as you love me, Robert, use your skill.
 Lie the seams fair? Sits any part awry?
 Observe the buttons their due distances?
 The slashes their proportions and their places?
 The skirts their lengths and uniformity?
 Lurks anywhere a wrinkle, or a crease?
 Find me a fault, dear Robert, if you can.

Rob. The suit, methinks, is perfect.

Sir Phil. Look again
 And jealously! Find me a fault, I'll find
 A crown for you.

Rob. Sooner I'd miss the fault
 Than get the crown.

Sir Phil. I know thy honesty.
 But find the fault, although thou gett'st the crown.

Rob. What's that?

Sir Phil. What, Robert?

Rob. If I may believe

My eyes—

Sir Phil. Be sure thou mayst, if 'tis a fault
 Thou think'st thou seest.

Rob. 'Tis a fault I see!

Sir Phil. What is it?

Rob. Yet, perhaps, 'tis not a fault.

Sir Phil. It must be one! Thou'rt not inclined to see it,
 And therefore doubt'st it! What is it?

Rob. Alas!

It is a fault.

Sir Phil. A great or little one?
 Don't keep me in suspense; I'm on the rack!
 Well, Robert, well!

Rob. It is a little fault!

A very little fault—a wrinkle only
 About an inch, a quarter, and a tenth
 In length.

Sir Phil. Were it the tenth without the rest,
 It spoils the suit—off with't! It shall go back!

Rob. It much becomes you! Well the colour sorts
 With your complexion!—and the pattern flogs
 All past achievements of the shaping art!
 And 'tis a dress of excellent proportions,
 Sets off your person to unmatched advantage.
 Look at the sleeve alone!—How plain it shows
 The tailor tax'd his brains!

Sir Phil. Where lies the wrinkle?

Rob. Here, near the seam of the left shoulder.

Sir Phil. That's

A place a wrinkle may have leave to come!
 Canst help the wrinkle? There's the piece I promised
 For finding it. If thou canst help it, now,
 That piece will find a fellow.

Rob. I shall try.

I will not promise you I shall succeed.
Stand straight and still. Now, please you, raise your arm;
Now put it down again—Upon my life
'Tis growing less.

Sir Phil. Well done, good Robert.

Rob. 'Tis

Almost away.

Sir Phil. Say it is quite away,
I'll give thee the third piece.

Rob. I would I could;
No hope of that, I fear! A wrinkle is
A stubborn thing! Eh?—What?—I must be blind?
Why, where is it?

Sir Phil. Is't gone?

Rob. I am bewitch'd!

Is aught the matter, think you, with my sight?
Or that is gone, or else the wrinkle's gone;
So gone I swear I cannot find the place!
I can't believe there ever was a wrinkle!

Sir Phil. Good Robert, there are the two crowns.

Rob. Dear sir,
I don't deserve them.

Sir Phil. Nay!—

Rob. Indeed I don't.

Sir Phil. I'll not believe thee.

Rob. Nay, I swear I don't.

I must have fancied that there was a wrinkle.

Sir Phil. Robert, a virtue may become a vice,
Carried too far! Thou art too honest, Robert.

Rob. Nay, hear me, sir!

Sir Phil. I won't! There was a wrinkle!
Did I not set me on my perfect poise?
Stood I not motionless as block of stone?
Then at thy bidding raised I not my arm,
And lower'd it again, that thou mightst jerk
My skirts to take the wrinkle out?—and now
Persuade me there was none! There was a wrinkle!
I will not hear thee!—Peace! So Lady Blanche
And Lady Anne were in the Park to-day!
How look'd fair Lady Blanche?

Rob. Oh, charmingly!
But her companion were the maid for me;
I love her lip of scorn! It dares a man!

Sir Phil. That's shrewdly felt! He were a man indeed
That carried her! That man is yet to come!
She glories in her single state; and, train'd
To mastery in studies men affect,
And seldom progress in, as well as she,
Looks down on all our sex, o'erbearingly,
And leaves the field to lovely Lady Blanche;
Who, though she smiles on courtship, looks as cold
On matrimony as her scornful friend;

While troops besiege her—I among the rest.
 But now good-bye to Venus! Mars commands!
 Be ready, Robert, for the route to-morrow!
 We march at one: meanwhile to Ludgate Hill
 I go, that careless artisan to chide
 My beaver jewel who so slightly set,
 I lost it in the street. Men call me fop,
 And so I am, so will be, and why not?
 It is my humour! Better fop than fool;
 And he's a fool that does not please himself;
 And so the more they smile, the more they may;
 The more I'll give them cause, and smile myself,
 Sitting at ease in mine own snug content,
 Wearing a cheery, frank, and saucy cheek!
 Now tell me, Robert, what men say of me?
 What comeliness give they me credit for.
 Besides my person, which I know will pass?

Rob. They say, though rather vain, you are very brave.

Sir Phil. What is it to be brave! I give Heaven thanks
 I was not born a spaniel!—What had I
 To do with that? Find something of mine own
 For which they praise me, I shall thank them then!
 What say they to my gait? I made my gait
 Myself! There's matter in men's gait, good Robert!
 Therein you have the impress of their callings:
 There is the clerk's gait, which implies obedience;
 The shopkeeper's, half service, half command;
 The merchant's, o'er-revolving speculations;
 The lawyer's, quick and keen at quirks and flaws;
 The student's, ponderous as piles of folios;
 The courtier's, supple, prompt for courtesies;
 The soldier's, keeping time with drums and trumpets;
 And twenty others—all most common-place!
 But there's one gait that's paramount of all—
 The gentleman's, that speaks not any calling;
 Shows him at liberty to please himself;
 And, while it meditates offence to none,
 Observes a proper negligence towards all,
 And imperturbable complacency!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—MASTER BLOUNT'S House.—A Room
 contiguous to his Shop.

Enter JOHN BLOUNT and THOMAS BLOUNT.

Thomas. I will not bide the baiting of thy tongue!—
 I say, I will not!—Let my father rail,
 I'll hear him patiently. I owe not thee
 Observance!—What's the year or two thou hast
 The start of me?

John. I speak but for thy good.

Thomas. Nay, not for that! Thou wouldst speak kindly else!

The fault thou find'st would reach no ear but mine;
I know thee, brother; my defect thou makest
A finger-post to show thine own deserts,
To win me anger, while thyself winn'st praise!
I know thee, John!—I say, no more of this;
I will not bear it!—should not!—I'm a man!

John. Wilt strike me?

Thomas. Heaven forbid my mother's son
Should e'er get blow from me. I tell thee what,
Thou aim'st at empire of my father's heart!
Thou to my father's business wouldst be heir!
Be so!—Thou ne'er shalt find, in me, a let.
His stock-in-trade, good-will, whate'er he hath
Pertaining to his craft, or grown from it,
I freely from this hour renounce all share in!
I'll seek my fortune!—Here I will not stay.
To play the money-grub—while men not made
Of better metal, find themselves a name
That lifts them 'bove their birth!

Enter MASTER BLOUNT.

Mas. Blount. How's this?—at words?
Thy brother John has been reproving thee.
And thou resistest him—and wherefore, son?
Because he's right, and thou art in the wrong!
The counter, boy!—go practise patience, there!
'Twas that which made thy father, with the help
Of industry. 'Tis roof, son; bed and board,
With which 'tis well thou art provided, else
Thou ne'er hadst earn'd them, Thomas, for thyself!

Thomas. I might have earn'd them, had I been allow'd!

Mas. Blount. Allowed?—

Thomas. To earn them in the way I could!

Mas. Blount. Thou'dst be a soldier, or wouldst go to sea—
Chimeras evermore of boyhood's brain!

John. I never knew them, father.

Mas. Blount. Never, John!

Thou ever didst my wish, and didst it well.

John. And found my own in it. Except for sleep
And meals, I never took an hour from work,
Nor would, suppose I might—nor cared I what
You set me to—the crucible, the vice,
The desk or counter—'twas your will, and done.

Mas. Blount. Ay, John, you are a pattern of a boy!
Go, Thomas! copy by your elder brother!
Demean yourself submissively to him;
Remembering thou dost thy father's will!

Thomas. I love my father! Would that I could love
My father's craft—but that I cannot love!

[Goes out, following JOHN.]

Enter MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Mis. Blount. Heard I not words? I did!—what's wrong with Thomas?

John has been chafing him again! He's not
The boy to bear it, nor is't right he should.
The shop don't fit him, husband! Thou wouldst put
Thy turnspit to his use, thy hound to his;
Did any urge thee to exchange their work,
Thou'dst think him fool, didst thou not call him one!
Thy cart-horse foal, when thou didst set to cart,
Thou didst the thing was wise!—as wisely didst
To break thy jennet's filly for the saddle;
As beast of draught she were not worth her meat!
Givest ear to me? Dost weigh my words?

Mas. Blount. I do.

Mis. Blount. And if thou dost, thou wilt not find them light.
And dost perceive the sequel?

Mas. Blount. No.

Mis. Blount. I am sure
Thou dost not! Never canst thou see the thing
That lies not straight before thee. Ope thine eyes,
And I will put the sequel in their range,
Point blank! Men vary more than horse or dog.
Not as the parentage the progeny!
The noble's cradle rocks a churl—the churl's
A nobleman! A simple craftsman thou,
Hast son, the craft was never made would fit;—
And he must drudge because his father did!

Mas. Blount. Drudge dost thou say?

Mis. Blount. Ay, drudge! and say't again.

Mas. Blount. His brother drudges.

Mis. Blount. So his brother may!

It is his humour; he's his father's son.

Mas. Blount. Whom takes the other after?

Mis. Blount. Whom?—why me!

I tell thee, Thomas is his mother's son.

No handicraft will he make progress in!

Money he values for the using on't—

Would buy a coach and horses in the time

Thou balancest the outlay of a truck!

Mas. Blount. A hopeful son, methinks, has Master Blount,
The Ludgate jeweller.

Mis. Blount. Most hopeful, John;

But not in the shape thou wishest hope to come in,

With sleek comb'd hair and ponderous busy brow,

Scanning a bodkin to resolve him whether

'Tis gold or pinchbeck!—I forgot!—thy hope

Hath comely apron on!—Now look at mine!

A youth of standard height!—proportion'd, well,

In trunk and limb!—of handsome face and bold!

Very!—A cap and plume upon his head!—

Across his field of breast a scarf and belt!

And, in the belt, a sword, as fits a man!

Mas. Blount. What cavalier is this?

Mis. Blount. What cavalier?

Thou knowest not thine own son, husband John!

I lose all patience with thee! Listen now!

Thou hast a son whom fortune meant to climb,

And thou wouldst have to creep!—What use is he

In thy shop or workshop, where thou east'dst him when

He came from school, as metal that is fused

Into the mould, thinking he'd take what shape

It pleased thee give him?—Flesh and blood are not

So passive, John!—How little knowest thou,

Dear John, beyond thy trade! Nine months ago

Lapsed his apprenticeship of seven long years,

And earns he now the keep of journeyman?

No!—Do I blame him?—No!—When thou gett'st gold

To do the work of lead, I'll blame him, John,

But not till then.

Mas. Blount. The fault is thine.

Mis. Blount. Is mine!

Am I in fault?

Mas. Blount. I say—

Mis. Blount. Am I in fault?

Mas. Blount. I won't say *fault*.

Mis. Blount. Go on.

Mas. Blount. Thou hast him taught

The ways of gentleman. Contents thee not

He learns our homely measures, he must skip

As courtiers do, so thou provid'st him with

A foreign dancing-master! Not enough

The jockey, taught his brother, should teach him,

Behoves him have a soldier's seat, and so

Thou gett'st a regimental riding-master!

Mis. Blount. Proceed, good husband John.

Mas. Blount. It pleased thee not

Dick Cottingham should teach him quarter-staff—

Mis. Blount. Dick Cottingham!—I'd beat Dick Cottingham

At quarter-staff myself!

Mas. Blount. Thou must employ

Professionals in that.

Mis. Blount. Teach a boy right,

Or not at all! Go on!

Mas. Blount. From quarter-staff

He needs must to the rapier go.

Mis. Blount. No doubt!

Mas. Blount. The which—not satisfied the boy should get

A simple notion on't—he practises

Till he can beat his master!

Mis. Blount. Art not glad

Of that?—Art thou not glad on't, husband John?

The day will come, and, mind my words, it will,

When thou wilt chuckle at it!—chuckle, husband!
Thy boy can beat his master!—who'll beat *him*?

Mas. Blount. John is as good a boy!

Mis. Blount. Who cheapens John?

What loss to him his brother gets his due?

He likes the inside of the counter!—Well,

He has it!—Thomas likes the other side!

And yet thou know'st not John!—Though he's my son,

He's cunning. 'Tis not natural in one,

So young in years, to be, in acts, so old.

The husbandman prefers a backward spring!

The fruit is fear'd that comes before its time!

Did John observe thee less, 'twould please me more!

What wouldst thou say now, should I tell thee plain?

His fancies look a mile beyond the shop,

In which thou think'st his heart wrapp'd wholly up?

'Tis so; he'd laugh to throw the apron off

He smiles at putting on!

Mas. Blount. Thou wrong'st him, wife.

Mis. Blount. Believe so, since thou wilt—let me know Thomas.
He'll ne'er ply craft, but be a gentleman.

That time is come with you, and still you toil.

Mas. Blount. I'll think on what thou say'st.

Mis. Blount. So, husband, do.

The man who has a wife hath counsel, John,

At hand, that's ever better than his own!

[*Goes out.*]

Sir P. Bril. [*without*]. Within is he? Then I'll step in to him.

Mas. Blount. Sir Philip Brilliant!—He speaks angrily.

Sir Phil. [*Entering.*] How comes it, Master Blount, you treat me thus?

Why callest thou thyself a jeweller,

And sett'st a gem so carelessly, as soon

As worn, 'tis lost? Where is the brilliant, sir,

I paid thee down a hundred crowns for? Look!

'Tis gone.

[*Showing his hat.*]

Mas. Blount. I see it is, and grieve for it.

Sir Phil. Wilt thou replace it?

Mas. Blount. Is it fit I should?

Sir Phil. Yes; for you set it.

Mas. Blount. Yes; and set it well!

Sir Phil. Well, Master Blount! Sett'st thou a jewel well,
And falls it out as soon as set?

Mas. Blount. The loop

You must have strain'd!—You flung your beaver down,

And gave it blow, perhaps; or doffing it

Too freely, swung'st against a wall or rail,

And shook'st, thyself, the jewel from its seat.

Sir Phil. Not so I doff my beaver!—Throw it down!

'Sdeath, Master Blount, thou think'st it not enough,

Through fault of thee I lose a peerless gem—

Thou must disparage, too, my bearing, sir!

My carriage, sir, wherein I stand alone,
Which prize beyond a mine—ay, mines of gems!
I fling my beaver down?—I strike a wall
Or rail, in doffing it? *I?—I?*—The gem
I might forgive, but can't pass over that!
Down, sir, and beg my pardon!

Thom. [*Coming forward.*] He shall not!
The gem was fitly set.

Sir Phil. How knowest thou?

Thom. My father says it!—That the gem was lost,
Was fault of thine alone.

Sir Phil. Do you know me?

Thom. Yes.

Sir Phil. I know thou dost; yet knowing it, I doubt,
Through wonder at thy boldness, sirrah!

Thom. What!

Sir Phil. Know'st thou what cuffs are?

Thom. Yes; I have given them!

Sir Phil. Ay?

'Tis time thou learn to take them.

Thom. Thou'rt not he
Can teach me that.

Sir Phil. [*Aside to him.*] Ay? thou preferr'st perhaps
A higher lesson. Canst thou use a sword?

Thom. [*Aside to SIR PHILIP.*] By trying thou canst judge.

Sir Phil. [*Aside to THOMAS.*] If worthy one,
Thou'lt steal a rapier out and follow me
A pace beyond the wall—I'll wait thee there. [*Goes out.*]

Mas. Blount. What said he, Thomas?

Thom. Something—nothing, sir.

His fault, methinks, he half begins to see.
That errand, brother, you would send me on,
I hasten now to do.

Mas. Blount. What errand, Thomas?

Thom. John will inform you, sir. [*Goes out.*]

Mas. Blount. What is it, John?

John. I vow he has scared my memory out of me.

Mas. Blount. What errand has thy brother gone upon?

John. I vow I have forgot.

Mas. Blount. There's something more
Than he would let me see.—Thy cap, boy, haste,
While I get mine, for we must after him! [*They go out.*]

SCENE III.—*The outside of London Wall.*

Enter SIR PHILIP BRILLIANT.

Sir Phil. The goldsmith's son has won me! There are men,
I have heard warriors say, look beautiful
In action. So would he! How radiantly
The man shone out! We'll change a pass or two,

I'll touch him, that I prove him! 'Tis one thing
 To talk about the rapier's point, another
 To look upon it, and another yet
 To feel it. He shall feel it—not to rue it!
 He comes! There is purpose in his looks! His heart
 And feet are going the same way! The man
 I take him for!—worth winning for a friend!
 You have made haste.

Enter THOMAS.

Thom. What haste I could.

Sir Phil. I know it,
 And I expected it, and like you for it!
 I love an enemy to be in earnest!
 You are sure you use the rapier?

Thom. Judge yourself—
 I am ready for you!—Come!

[*They fight.*]

Sir Phil. You are too hot,
 And lay yourself too open. Twice just now
 I could have run you through!

Thom. Why did not you?

Sir Phil. Aha! Beware, or you will make me hug you!

Thom. Come on.

Sir Phil. Be cooler, then.

Thom. I will.

Sir Phil. That's right!
 Most sweetly parried!—Better yet return'd!
 That feint was masterly; I balk'd it though—
 I have hit you!

Thom. No! Come on!

Sir Phil. I am sure I have!

Thom. Come on!

Sir Phil. You felt me, for I felt my point!

Thom. Come on, I say!

Sir Phil. Since you will have it so!
 That longe meant something, but it would not do.
 Prepare!—I'll hit you now again! 'Tis done!

Thom. I fight, not talk!

Sir Phil. I talk whene'er I fight,
 As when I eat or drink.

Thom. Come on!

Sir Phil. Again!
 I have hit you thrice.

Thom. I feel no wound!

Sir Phil. There's blood!

Thom. A scratch brings blood!

Sir Phil. A deep one, though, it takes
 To drain the cheek; and thine is growing pale—
 Not, I'll be sworn, with fear! I touch'd you, only,
 Because I meant to sting you, not to kill,
 Before I knew you, as I know you now.
 But knowing you as now I do, I swear
 I would not kill you for mine own life's sake,

Which at your will I place!

[*Throws down his sword*; THOMAS drops his, and tottering towards SIR PHILIP, faints in his arms.

I fear'd 'twas so,

But fear no worse.—He faints, from loss of blood;

A flesh-wound, nothing graver—Stanch'd, 'tis heal'd!

Enter MASTER BLOUNT and JOHN.

Mas. Blount. Sir Philip, what's amiss?

Sir Phil. Your son revives;

A passing sickness only, Master Blount;

Stanching removes it quite. Your handkerchief

To keep the compress on I make of mine.

His colour comes again, and all is right!

Now hear you, Master Blount. Ne'er left your shop

A jewel rich as is this son of yours.

Commit his fortunes to my hands!—You shall!

I have proved his metal—It has won my heart,

And turn'd me from a foe into a friend;

Yea more, a brother, bound to him as fast

As he partition'd with me the same blood.

Refuse me not!—I will not be gainsaid!

My footman comes—my carriage is at hand.

Enter Footman.

The gem I lost I will forgive thee for,

And fifty to its back, so grant me this.

Although not born a gentleman, thy son

Was form'd to be one; such I'll make of him!

So farewell desk and counter, Master Blount!

There!—Gently—come along with us!—Take care!

[SIR PHILIP and his footman supporting THOMAS, go out, followed by MASTER BLOUNT.

John. The shop is now my own! As we came hither,

My father said he would retire from it;

And leave his trade to me!—and if he does,

Not long his trade and I keep company.

We have been intimates too close—too long—

Familiarity begets contempt!

I hate and scorn my trade. He little knows

What riches burrow in his drawers and chests;

The keys of which I keep, and he forgets!

My plans are laid!—Soon as he quits the town,

I sell off stock and trade, and quit the shop!

Talk of our Thomas!—He a gentleman!

Where is the money? I have taken care

Of that! From interest on his bonds alone

My father will retire in affluence;

The rest is mine, and I'll make use of it

To lay myself out for a high alliance

By marriage!—Trust to me for policy.

If there is one thing I am better in

Than any other thing—'tis policy.

[*Goes out.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Park.*

Enter ROBERT, STEPHEN, and JACOB.

Rob. He is as rich as Cræsus, sirs, with wit
Enough to keep his purse-strings tight, unless
His own particular occasion prompts
The wish to loosen them! He is at once
Luxurious and a miser.—Some good nature,
More cunning, less discretion. You see through him;
He has a vanity which lays him open
To commonest observers: for example,—
Know him an hour, and he spreads out for you
A banquet of his tastes, his faculties,
His qualities; wherein he most succeeds—
Which is by turns, indeed, in everything—
Not that he would appear to slight his neighbours,
Or wish to pass for anything, beyond
A common, simple, ordinary man!

Steph. Where made you this redoubtable acquaintance?

Rob. Why, at a race-course, on a holiday,
When fortune made us neighbours. One who knew me
At distance, give me salutation by
The title which I hold in virtue of
My place near fair Sir Philip! In a moment
I was a friend the richer! Straight he grappled me!
His name, his station, income, residence,
All in a twink were mine—his sole omission
The stock he sprung from, which he would root up—
Yea, sirs, the very father that begot him,
And gave up stock and trade to him—and affluence
Beyond his calculation; the slow piling
Of fifty years and upwards, to himself
Grown out of mind, but not to his successor;
Who, having long imprison'd upstart wishes
Beneath the homely apron of his craft,
Now throws this off, no more of use to him,
And shows the others that now need no concealment!
Converts his drawers and shelves to currency,
His currency to lands and messuages,
And o'er the tradesman's counter featly vaulting,
Springs into the saddle of the gentleman!
By strangest chance I learnt his history.

Jacob. Hopeful acquaintance.

Rob. Say fruition-full!

Well, sir, "I must go home with him; partake
"What a plain dresser sends." Ere dinner's done,
I am in his bosom! Now beseeches he
My list of lady spinsters, which I give him,

The features, stature, carriage, and complexion,
Wit, temper, parentage, and education ;
When, of my goodness, prays he introduction
To one I think would suit him !

Steph. Which, of course,
You grant him.

Rob. Readily !

Steph. My life upon it,
The countess !

Jacob. Charlotte !—Maid to Lady Jane ?

Rob. No less.

Jacob. Had he but known the rogue he dealt with !
A simpleton as safe beside a sharper !

Rob. Yet knowing, modestly, I had my masters
Compared to whom I am a journeyman,
I promised presentation to your lordships—
For you are lords in virtue of your places,
As I, in right of mine, a baronet—
And here appointed him this afternoon

His walk to that intent ! Ah, here he is !
I pray you keep your rank before your eyes
In all you say and do. They only may
Forget their rank who have good title to it,
And by the lapse prove gainers. Mind, you are lords.

John. [*Entering.*] Good morning to you, fair Sir Philip,
Fair

Is fairest worth.—So, sir, I bow to you.

Rob. The noble friends I had the honour, sir,
Of naming to you—this Lord Stephen Hyde,
And this Lord John Fitzwalter.

John. Dear me, sir,
You overpower me !—May I use the freedom
To shake hands with your lordships ?

Steph. 'Tis a boon, sir,
We would entreat of you !

John. [*To ROBERT.*] *There's noble breeding !*

Rob. Whence come you ?

John. From my after-dinner airing,
In my own phaeton, built to my own order,
After a pattern of my own designing ;
The springs my own, the perch, the pole, the colour,
Harness and everything ! So please your lordships,
I have a taste, and it shall have its way
While I can pay for it.

Steph. As right it should, sir.

John. Then am I fond of driving.

Jacob. Most men like
The thing that they excel in.

John. Oh, my lord !—

Your lordship may have seen me hold the reins—
I flatter myself you have !

Jacob. You may so, safely.

John. I could have sworn you had! If there is one thing I master 'fore another, it is holding the reins.

Rob. What did you before breakfast?

John. Ride—

Your lordships fancy horses?—All men do who have good judgment, and can back them well, Mine are all thorough-bred!—my hackney even!—And broke in for myself.—A horse, my lords, Should know his master, and him only!—No Believing what a universe of mischief Is done by a strange hand! The mouth is spoil'd!—If not the mouth, the pace; if not the pace, The temper!—maybe, temper, pace, and mouth Together!—What's the value of the horse! And then the seat—No easy thing, my lords! Of fifty men who vault into the saddle, Not one may have a seat there! In the manage Be there one thing wherein I beat another, 'Tis in my seat!

Steph. Most safely may you say it!

John. Your lordship, I presume, has seen me ride. Sir Philip, 'hope you have not got a headache?

Rob. Not I!—have you?

John. Why something rather like one, For which I blame the wine of yesterday.

Rob. Nay, sir, the wine was good.

John. Oh, excellent;

A most sound wine, and of the proper age; Three years in wood, in bottle thrice that time; The merchant durst not cheat me, for he knows me. I ne'er keep wine but of prime quality! I have a cellar—No one less occasion To find fault with his wine!—Were mine not good, The money was that bought it!—but no foresight Is match against mishap!—A bottle may Be cork'd. 'Twas so with the last bottle! At The time I had a slight suspicion only, But now I am positive!

Rob. You are deceived.

John. Impossible, my dear Sir Philip. If I am superlative in anything, Beyond all other things that I excel in, 'Tis in my taste for wine!

Rob. But now to business!

My noble friends approve the match we spoke of, And promise you their interest, to help Your wish to its fulfilment!

John. They o'erpower me!

My lords, I am beholden to you more Than did I ransack the whole dictionary, I could find words of value to describe!

Befits it, though, a private gentleman,
Of modest fortune, only, at the best,
Should offer hand to dame of quality?

Talk'd you not, dear Sir Philip, of promotion?

Rob. Oh, yes!—promotion certainly—Lord John,
Where have you the most interest? in church
Or state?

Steph. 'Tis difficult to say—let's see!
Upon my word, I think it is a balance!

Rob. And how say you, Lord Stephen?

Jacob. Like Lord John,
In church and state, my interest is equal.

Rob. [To JOHN.] How leans *your* predilection?—to the
church?

John. Why, hang it, no! the surplice spoils the figure,
A man and gown sort strangely!—fancy me
In a gown! I might endure it on the Sunday,
But for the week-day gear that's tack'd to it!
Of formal mode and sombre colour! Dress
All the year round most like an undertaker
In waiting upon funerals!—could I wear
This cap and plume were I a clergyman?

Rob. [and the rest]. No, certainly!

John. The church won't do for me.

Rob. It must be in the state, then! For what office
Would you be ready, on emergency,
Say one fell sudden vacant?

John. Will you believe me,
I cannot tell!

Rob. There is the Home department,
And there's the Foreign! There's the minister
Of War and of Finance!—Diplomacy
Perhaps might suit your genius! Which of these
Would find you most at home, sir?

John. Do you know,
I'm at a loss to tell!—Indeed I am!
Upon my life I am!—To answer you,
Safely, for both your credit and my own,
I think 'twere best I say, as likely one
As another.

Rob. Doubtless there is none you fear
To undertake?

John. None!—Fear? No fear, Sir Philip!
Find me the office, I am sure to find
Abilities to fill it!

Rob. Yet perhaps
There's something you prefer to church or state;
What think you of the army?

John. Of the army?
It is my taste, my bent, my very instinct!
It must be!—why should else a fife and drum
Raise in me such commotion? When I hear them,

The war is all before me!—Infantry,
Cavalry, and artillery, and baggage!
Marchings, encampings, battles, sieges!—feats
In the field and breach of superhuman daring,
Such perils breasted and o'ercome, as man
Durst never cope before with—look at—think of—
All of my own conceiving

Rob. Dream you never
Of dying in such straits?

John. No!—Never!

Rob. Strange!—

I may say, wonderful!

John. You may!—Through bayonets

And swords I rush, as they were stubble—hail

Of cannon-balls, shells, musketry, no more

Than wither'd leaves blown round by winds in autumn!

Rob. And are you never wounded?

John. Wounded?—Yes!

Struck down, but up and on my feet again

Almost in the self-same moment!

Rob. Pain and all

Forgotten?

John. As a pin had scratch'd me.

Rob. And

Enacting more than ever!

John. Miracles!

Steph. He certainly was born to be a soldier.

John. And such I will be with your leaves, my lords.

What rank?

Rob. Behoves you be an ensign first,

From ensign to lieutenant, thence to captain,

On captain mounts the major, on the major

The colonel.

John. Takes it long to be the colonel?

Rob. By service long, by interest not at all!

John. I'll choose the army.

Rob. Yet, my lords, a word!

'Twill never do to court proud Lady Blanche

As ensign or lieutenant; nay, as even

Captain or major!—Nothing less, my lord,

Than colonel! Here is a dilemma!

Steph. A

Dilemma, certainly.

Jacob. A sad dilemma.

John. My lords!—Sir Philip—what is to be done?

Rob. Stop!—Hold!—I have it!—What is sure to come,

One surely may regard as come, already!

Steph. Ay, come as certain, as about to come.

Rob. And why not call him colonel then at once?

Your lordship will have no objection?

Steph. None.

John. My dear good lord.

Rob. Nor you, my lord?

Jacob. No more
Than his lordship.

John. My most excellent good lord!

Rob. Then, Colonel Blount, I give you joy!

John. My dear
Sir Philip!

Steph. and Jacob. Give you joy, fair Colonel Blount.

John. Dear lords—Dear friend—I choke with gratitude.

Rob. There only wants the introduction now,
Which I'll accomplish with your lordship's help.
I know you'll patronize my friend, whilst I
Take charge of Lady Blanche; and as we go,
We'll settle time and place! Come, colonel; show us
How you can court!

John. Court, sir?—Did you say, court?

Therein am I especially at home!

May I presume on any excellence

I have, it is on knowing how to court!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in the House of Lady Anne.*

Enter CHARLOTTE and JANE.

Char. A fine plot, is it not?

Jane. But where the profit,
Besides the mirth 'twill bring you?

Char. Quite enough!

Jane. You have not seen him yet?

Char. That happiness

Lies in perspective. They appoint to-day
The time and place of meeting. If, by chance,
You note me in the street with a strange friend,
Remember I'm the countess—pass me by,
Unless I give you sign I am myself.

Jane. And Robert plann'd it all?

Char. Robert?—For shame!

Sir Philip, if you please! If, when together,
We talk of one another, keep in mind
We are our noble selves! You Lady Anne!
I, Lady Blanche!—Robert, Sir Philip Brilliant;
Jacob and Stephen, of their masters' styles;
Lord John Fitzwalter and Lord Stephen Hyde!

And, so, through all our circle of familiars!
'Tis but with such, as do not understand us,
Who know us less, than we do one another,
We pass for commoners! You are new to us!
Sir Philip is the author of the plot.

'Twas not to lose his time he went to college—
No more than others born and bred above him—

And spent three years there ! You will travel ere
You find his match in mischief.

Jane. [*Listening.*] Did you hear
My lady's voice ?

Char. I heard that person speak.

Jane. That person ?

Char. Lady Anne, 'long as you live,
Never let down yourself !—You'll find too many
Ready to do that kindness for you.

Jane. [*Listening.*] There
Is Lady Blanche.

Char. I think it is that person.

Don't look surprised—although we owe her some
Consideration, as our foster sister,
Who shared with us our mother's nurture—nay,
Participates with us almost one nature,
Making a jest of love, and sport of lovers ;
While, she *you* deign to serve, escheweth both !
We trust your ladyship will be at home
To-morrow when we call.

Jane. Yes, Charlotte.

Char. Charlotte !

Forgive me, Lady Anne—your ladyship
Forgets yourself ! 'Tis Lady Blanche departs
And bids good morning to you, lady ! [*They go out severally.*]

SCENE III.—*Another Room.*

Enter LADY BLANCHE and LADY ANNE.

Lady Bl. Man !—man !—the paragon !—The fool, he is,
When women know themselves and how to treat him ;
The knave, when left to his own practices !
Is there a husband you can name, who bears
His course of wooing out ?—who does not prove it
A trade of common snaring ?—who resembles
The man he was before the honey-moon ?
A woman's life, my friend, from girlhood onwards,
Has melancholy progress ! She begins
A goddess ; then declines into a bride—
Which means a young wife keeping holiday,
As children, sent to school, go not at once
To tasks—next sinks into a housekeeper—
Her wedding-ring her badge of office !—thence
Haply into a nurse !—When, matters not
How soon she settles into grandmama,
To tell her offspring, of her second stock,
The story of her cozening !

Lady A. How I love you
When thus you talk ! Would all our sex were like you !
And, yet, *you* suffer men, while *I* repel them !

Lady Bl. I suffer them, to plague them, and I do so.
 You are an old maid by anticipation,
 And make the arch dissemblers stand aloof.
 Oh, how I dote upon a stanch old maid!—
 I'll die one!—She stands up for liberty!
 Talk of the rights of men! The rights that want
 Upholding are the rights of women!—Men
 Are tyrants!—have too many rights! We know it!
 Ours are the rights want champions! We should be lost
 Without old maids—Oh, the delicious crabs!
 The faces men make at them, when they find them
 Their masters!

Lady A. Women have more soul than men.

Lady Bl. Men have no soul at all compared to women!
 Look at Queen Bess! The man she made of England—
 A man to cuff all comers! She was in fault
 In one thing, though.

Lady A. And prithee what was that?

Lady Bl. She did not call her own sex to her councils!
 Which had she done, women had proved themselves
 The things they *could* be, would men give them leave!
 Cecil and Burleigh!—Bacon!—What were they
 But what a woman made them? Men, indeed!
 There was a sample of man's proper place,
 When Essex got his ears box'd!—Do you feel
 Your fingers tingle? Mine do!—Yet was she
 In love with Essex!

Lady A. Were you ne'er in love?

Lady Bl. Are you in madness! Wherefore do you ask?

Lady A. Because of late, whene'er you talk of love
 You sigh! I have had strange thoughts about you, Blanche.
 They call you a coquette, and so you are;
 Yet something tells me, once upon a time,
 You felt a touch of love. Do you remember
 A certain fair Whit-Monday? Ah, you blush!

Lady Bl. Because you tax me!—Blush!—That fair Whit-Monday

We went a-shopping; and, for an adventure,
 Disguised ourselves as simple yeoman's daughters.
 What's *there* to blush at?

Lady A. Nothing, if no more—

If nothing follow'd—if that fair Whit-Monday
 You did not make a conquest of a youth
 Who waited on us.

Lady Bl. Was it at the draper's?

Lady A. No, Blanche. No youth was in the draper's shop!

Lady Bl. The mercer's, then?

Lady A. Nor was it at the mercer's,
 Nor yet the cordwainer's—where had it been,
 How had the blushing youth contrived to take
 The span of your maidship's instep, all the while
 His eyes upon your face—whence, as I live,

He never moved them, till we left the shop,—
 Except to find the articles we ask'd for!—
 A youth misused of fate to set him, where
 Behoved his betters rather wait than he!
 A lofty forehead, like a marble dome
 For princely thoughts to dwell in!—eyes to court
 Challenge of war or love, showing themselves
 Frankly and boldly at their posts—a nose
 Of the fine Grecian, with a touch of Rome;
 Elegance crown'd with strength; a mouth composed
 Of lips were fashion'd after Cupid's bow,
 And, like it, made to send his arrow home,
 Wing'd with their dulcet twang! ambitious chin,
 Dimpled and knobb'd like pattern Antinous!
 There is his face, which well his neck and bust
 Deserved; as for the rest of him, you know
 The counter hid him from us.

Lady Bl. Counter-like!

In calculation of the drawback, doubtless,
 His head and bust had suffer'd, through the fault
 Of his mis-shapen legs. I should not wonder
 Had he clubb'd feet.

Lady A. Have you not seen his feet?
 Come! Did you never on adventure go
 A-shopping there again?

Lady Bl. Well, Anne, I did!
 Again, and yet again.—Nay, do not laugh,
 'Twas only to enjoy the goldsmith's blush!

Lady A. There, Blanche! Just now you could not find
 the shop!

Lady Bl. Well! things will jump into one's memory
 When least we look for them. Why do you laugh?
 Don't laugh, dear Anne, and I shall tell you more!
 I took the goldsmith to my milliner's
 One day when he perforce would see me home—
 A yeoman's daughter could not well, you know,
 O'errule a goldsmith's son. Well, at the door
 In vain I dropp'd him curtesy after curtesy,
 In linsey-woolsey mode! He would not go.
 "He must have speech with me a minute!"—"Nay!"
 "Indeed he must,"—then said I, "Nay," again.
 "He must in pity,"—still did I say, "Nay."
 But what's the use of "nay," said fifty times,
 If "yes" at last will come?—and come it did:
 "He might have speech a minute!" What's a minute?
 A portion of an hour! A portion gone,
 The hour is broken!—What's the value of
 A broken thing?—As well he have the hour!
 The hour he had! The goldsmith's son was smitten;
 Love at first sight!—the arrow in the core!
 Whereat the maid amused—it may be *pleased*;
Touch'd, will you have it so.—Well, she was touch'd!—

Did after grant the goldsmith divers meetings,
Listening in silence to his rhapsodies
In rustic cloak, with hood drawn o'er her head,
Her face but half-revealing! Till, at length,
Feeling a something—nothing like a passion!—
Perhaps an interest—yes; like that one watches
The progress of a pleasant story with,
But which indulging, is but waste of time;
Having a horror, too, of slavery—
No matter how far out of reach of it—
And then, besides, admonish'd by my rank;
At last I took the resolution
To drop the masquerade—although, I own,
With some compunction.

Lady A. He deserved some.

Lady Bl. He!

Why, was he not a man!—He proved he was!
Made out his right and title.—Took his leave
Without good-bye, by word or yet by missive;
Since when I ne'er have met him. 'Twas as well,
Although it mortified me!—Nothing more.

Lady A. Who, think you, is come home? Sir Philip Brilliant.
When we have time, I'll let you hear a tale
Of him, that does him honour. His adventure
Was likewise with a goldsmith's son.

Lady Bl. Perhaps

The same.—What was it?—Come, the heads of it?

Lady A. They chanced to quarrel; fought. His adversary,
Though wounded, would not own it, till almost
He dropp'd with loss of blood—whereat Sir Philip,
Amazed and captivated, grew his friend;
Took him abroad with him, and step by step
Has raised to his own rank. He comes with him,
This very evening, to pay visit to me,
And introduce the gentleman.

Lady Bl. His name?

Lady A. I never thought to ask it!

Lady Bl. Should it be!

You and Sir Philip are good friends, it seems.
On me he has not call'd!

Lady A. He is your slave.

You have him at your foot whene'er you please;
I own it has amazed me, that a man,
So slight to contemplate, should have achieved
An act of generous manhood so robust
In healthy comeliness.

Jane. [Entering.] Sir Philip Brilliant.

Enter SIR PHILIP BRILLIANT *and* THOMAS *as* COLONEL
BLOUNT.

Lady A. Welcome, Sir Philip.

Sir Phil. Colonel Blount, my friend.

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] The goldsmith's son!

Sir Phil. Fair Lady Anne, I kiss
Your hand, and for my friend here, Colonel Blount,
Claim your acquaintance.

Lady A. [*To LADY BLANCHE.*] 'Tis the goldsmith's son!
He does not know you!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] How should he?—He never
Beheld my face except beneath my hood.
How can he, in the countess, find a trace
O' the simple yeoman's maid? You'll pardon me,
I must go home! Good evening!—Go you to
The rout to-night, Sir Philip?

Sir Phil. Yes.

Lady Bl. We'll meet;
And I can answer for our host, he'll thank you
To bring your friend.—Farewell.—Good morning, sir. [*Goes out.*]

Lady A. [*Aside.*] She seems disturb'd.

Sir Phil. Fair Lady Anne, permit
My friend to write a line that asks despatch,—
Forgot on leaving home!

Lady A. The library!
Pray you step in and freely help yourself.

Col. Blount. I thank you, lady!—How resemblances,
The most remote, recall familiar things,
As in a ray of light one sees the sun!
Less than the ray unto the sun is she
That's gone, to her whose image she recall'd;
And set before my mind, as palpably,
As though the paragon stood, there, before me! [*Goes out.*]

Sir Phil. Dear Lady Anne, in your kind welcome back
I gladly miss'd your wonted scorn of me.

Lady A. Gladly!—why name it then to bring it back?
See what you've done! What shall I call thee now?
Ware from the milliner's, the tailor's, or
The cordwainer's, or jeweller's, or what?
Thyself is the least part of thee! The man
Is trimmings to the dress.—Thou art a ruff
Of plaits elaborate and infinite;
Thy vest, for curiosity of style,
Armour of diamonds upon velvet plaited,
Were better given a cabinet to keep,
As theme for wonderment to after-time,
Than left provision for the hungry air,
That's sure to eat it up! Thy jerkin runs
Enormous risk from thy ambition! trying
With satin slashes, ribbon-knots, and lace,
How close to woman's gear a man's may come,
And still appear a man's—thy trunks partake
Its divers sins; and for thy hose, who says,
In town or out of town, thou walk'st not in
A shrubbery, why let him own he is blind,
To save his credit for veracity!

Thy very rapier would abjure the man!
 Its handle vouches for the laceman more
 Than the cutler—nay, nor him beside, alone;
 'Twas plann'd in concert with a milliner!
 Which of the precious metals has the honour
 To help it to a blade! It cannot be
 A thing so exquisitely delicate
 Could pair with homely steel?

Sir Phil. Give over!

Lady A. I will.

Sir Phil. I want a friend, dear Lady Anne.

Lady A. A friend?

And come you to a woman for a friend?

Better you seek a man!

Sir Phil. He cannot help me,—

A woman can; she knows a woman's mind,
 And how 'tis hit; which, being done, they say,
 Her heart's in jeopardy!

Lady A. Who say so? They

Who do not know her? Hit her heart, you are sure
 Of her mind.

Sir Phil. No easy thing to do! For, now,
 Three years and upwards have I tried to hit
 The heart of Lady Blanche!

Lady A. I know you have.

Sir Phil. Three years are past, yet am I now as wide
 As ever of the mark.

Lady A. Had you guess'd that
 At setting out, what labour had you spared,
 Or spent, perhaps, to more account, employ'd
 On some one else! *Sir Philip!*

Sir Phil. Lady Anne?

Lady A. For three years have you been my fair acquaintance;
 And, if I err not, all that lapse of time,
 You have enjoy'd good health!

Sir Phil. Nay; no man better!

Lady A. Your appetite has never fail'd you?

Sir Phil. Never!

Lady A. So I should think!—You have always slept
 o' nights?

Sir Phil. From laying down my head to lifting it!

Lady A. Sound sleep?—No trouble in the shape of dreams?

Sir Phil. None that I recollect.

Lady A. And yet in love!

And not successfully!—"Tis very strange!

Sir Phil. 'Tis very strange!

Lady A. Come, tell me how you feel
 Towards Lady Blanche? What are the signs, whereby
 You know you love her, when you think of her?
 Do you sigh very deeply?

Sir Phil. I'm not sure
 That e'er I sigh, at all—but I'm in love.

Lady A. You cannot be in love, unless you sigh.

Sir Phil. A man may sigh, without his knowing it.

Lady A. That's true. How feel you when another man
Detains her ear aloof?

Sir Phil. How feel I then?

How *should* I feel?

Lady A. Do you not purse your brows?

Sir Phil. No!

Lady A. No!—Do you not bite your lip?

Sir Phil. No!

Lady A. No?

Nor clench your hand?

Sir Phil. Nor clench my hand!—Why should I?

Lady A. Could you not knock him down?

Sir Phil. I should like to know

For what?

Lady A. You would like to know for what? You are deep—
You are very deep in love. What would you do
With Lady Blanche, suppose you married her?

Sir Phil. Show her to court and town—go everywhere,
And take her with me, that the world might see
She, that rejected scores, was won by me.

Lady A. It is his vanity that loves, not he! [*Aside.*
No enterprise of danger, then, it seems,
I help you in, instructing you the way
'To win the heart of lovely Lady Blanche!

Sir Phil. None!

Lady A. Should we fail, you are a sound man still;
There is no fear of dying, falling sick,
Of loss of appetite, or sleep, or aught
Pernicious to your comfort?

Sir Phil. Not the least!

Lady A. If you should fail, you fail; if win, you win!
Indifferent which!

Sir Phil. Nay, I would rather win!

Lady A. [*Aside.*] You ought, that covet it so heartily!

Sir Phil. Now, then, my lesson! What am I to do?

Lady A. 'Tis plain she likes you not, the man you are.

Sir Phil. 'Tis *very* plain.

Lady A. Then be another man.

This outlay of attire—this garniture
Of trimmings and of trinkets—looks not well
In certain women's eyes. It comes too near
Themselves!

Sir Phil. It does so.

Lady A. Change this gear at once.

Dress well, but let it be like other men—

Nothing particular—as if you'd say

“Look at me, ladies! How do you like me?” What

A question for a man! and do not speak

Between a simper and a lisp; it shames

A mouth with a beard; and don't tread mincingly:

'Tis bad enough in a woman,—what, then, in

A man! And in the act of courtesy
Give not your body such a sway, as though
It were a miracle the trunk and limbs
Could hold together; but in all your acts
Be simple and at home. You may gain much
And will lose nothing by it. Do you read?

Sir Phil. Occasionally, yes—by fits and starts.

Lady A. Latin and Greek?

Sir Phil. I have half-forgotten them.

Lady A. Would you renew your memory there with me,
You are welcome. Call and let us read together.

Sir Phil. Dear Lady Anne, how good you are! We are
friends?

Lady A. We are!

Sir Phil. Then let me seal it on your hand.

I am almost loath to go!

Lady A. "Almost," no stop!

Keep ever to "almost," you are safe enough!

Sir Phil. I'll see what keeps my friend!

Lady A. I'll follow you!

Sir Phil. Yet, ere I go, I'll kiss your hand, once more.

[*Goes out.*]

Lady A. That man has got a heart and does not know it.

Nought of himself, save what his mirror shows him,

He sees. His eyes are shut to what he is,

Therein, where lie his nobler properties.

I'll open them and make a man of him!

Anne! What art thou about? Eschewest thou

His sex and hold'st companionship with him?

In charity!—nothing more! It would be strange

If, teaching him to woo fair Lady Blanche,

I chanced to cause him turn his eyes on me!

At the bare thought how takes my heart alarm!

Well!—Can I help it, comes it to that pass?

It is his own affair! and, touching Blanche,

No heartscauld 'tis to her! She loves him not.

My life upon it, not without some cost,

Did Blanche return to sun her eyes again

I th' blushing cheek of the young jeweller!

I wonder was it fancy, but I thought

Sir Philip blush'd on taking leave of me.

Those blushes are strange things! Upon my life,

One cannot think of them, but one feels strangely!

Well for him he's in love with Lady Blanche.

If bad his chance with her, 'twere worse with me!

And yet I doubt if love for her he feels.

Love her three years, and never once fall sick,

Lack appetite, lose sleep—sound sleep! no dreams

To trouble it!—no hurricane of sighs.

Allow another lay close siege to her

And never purse his brow, nor bite his lip,

Nor clench his hand as he could knock him down!

He cannot be in love with Lady Blanche!

[*Goes out.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Park.*

Enter ROBERT and CHARLOTTE.

Rob. This is the place!—'Tis now almost the hour!
Now—Lady Blanche!—forget the lady's maid,
And be the countess. Bear yourself with height;
Incline your head in lieu of curtseying;
And that not over much! Be affluent
In airs!—As many graces as you can!
Do not forget your friends, Lords John and Stephen;
Let nothing trace them to the servants' room,
That falls from thee! And pray you keep in mind
My baronetcy!—but through all your pride
Let admiration of this coxcomb shine,
As it behoves you to be smit with him!
They come.—Now prove yourself an actress.—Mark!
We'll pass them first, then turn.—They know their cue.

Enter STEPHEN, JOHN, JACOB.

Steph. and Jacob [as they cross]. Good day!

Rob. and Char. [very stately; crossing and going out]. Good day!

John. [Stopping the others.] Is that the Countess?

Steph. Don't

Look back! 'Tis not the mode. We'll turn anon,
The odds are ten to one they do the same.

[They go out, then return; ROBERT and CHARLOTTE returning at the same time—both parties come to a stand.

Steph. Good day again, Sir Philip.

Rob. Dear Lord John,

It is, indeed, a fair and sunny day!

Lord Stephen, how are you?—Your servant, sir!

John. Mean you not to present me?

Steph. Stay awhile!

Char. [half-aloud to ROBERT]. A monstrous handsome person that, Sir Philip.

John. She speaks, methinks, of me!

Steph. and Jacob. Be sure she does.

John. She is struck! Pray introduce me.—Nothing like clinching the nail, at once!

Steph. My friend aspires

To know you, Lady Blanche.

Char. His grace is good!

John. She takes me for a duke!—Your Ladyship O'errates, alas, my rank! I am not a duke.

Char. Alas, not for your lordship, but the rank
Which lacks the pride of such an ornament.

John. She'll have me an earl, if I am not a duke.
I can't account for this!

Steph. 'Tis instinct, sir!
Like natures oft find one another out!
Though yet plain gentleman, I would not say
But you're an earl or duke in embryo!

John. I have my own forebodings thereupon;
'Twere fit I undeceived her,—were it not?
Fair lady! neither duke nor earl am I.

Char. I must believe your looks against your words!

John. Nay, lady, trust my words against my looks!

Rob. Fair Lady Blanche, 'tis even as he says;
Afflict him not with incredulity,
For he is honest, even as well-favour'd!
That noble presence—for it is, indeed,
No less than noble, as the evidence
Of feature, form, and bearing, clear attest—
Belongs to neither duke nor earl, but calls
A commoner its owner!

Char. Do you say so?
Nor duke nor earl!—Is he a baronet?

Rob. Nor yet a baronet!

John. How very strong
The feeling of my quality is upon her!

Char. Who is your friend, and what?

Rob. Lord John, how strangely
You introduced the gentleman! I vow
You never named him; so the ceremony
Must be perform'd again! Fair Lady Blanche,
Permit me to solicit your acquaintance
For Colonel Blount.

Char. For Colonel Blount!—Oh, no!

Rob. Indeed! indeed!

Char. I can't believe it.

Rob. True

As I'm a baronet.

Steph. Or I, a lord.

Jacob. Or I, another; or as your ladyship
Is Lady Blanche.

Char. Deny me Lady Blanche,
Deny that you are lords; Sir Philip, you
That you're a baronet; but tell me not
That gentleman is a colonel!—Colonel!—Fie!
Not he!

John. Does she suspect me, do you think?
I have my fears!

Rob. And so have I!

John. Indeed!

Were it not better, then, I stole away?

Char. A colonel! Fie Sir Philip—fie, Lord John,

Lord Stephen! Play on my credulity!
Palm your friend on me for a colonel!

John. Clear

She penetrates the truth—I must be gone:
Don't stop me, dear Sir Philip.

Char. Colonel—Sir,
Are you a colonel?

John. [*Aside to ROBERT.*] What am I to say?

Rob. Put a bold face upon it!—Say at once
You would not contradict her!

John. [*Stammering.*] 'Twere offence
To say I am the thing your ladyship
Asserts me not to be!

Char. I knew 'twas so!
I knew he was no colonel!

John. I'm undone!

Char. A colonel!—Does he look like one?—Why friends,
You cannot use your eyes! Your friend must be
A general!

John. Give me joy! I breathe again,
Like one half-drown'd that's to the surface brought!
I thank your ladyship for giving me
So high a rank! I am a general—
In prospect!

Rob. Now, you'll do. Propose to walk,
And offer her your arm.

John. Let me take time,
Scarce yet can I fetch breath.

Rob. Love's time is "*now!*"
It brooks not putting off! Love's time is when
It sees 'tis welcome. So *you* seem to be,
And make your most of it. Surprise will take
The fort would mock a siege! Declare yourself,
And straight propose. You know the chance faint heart
Runs with fair lady!

John. Yes.

Rob. Then profit by
The adage. Sure you lack not courage.

John. Courage?
And with a woman!—Be there anything
Wherein I have the mastery beyond
All other things, 'tis courage with a woman!
Your ladyship.

Char. [*Very stately.*] Sir! [*JOHN is thrown off his guard.*]

Steph. What is she about?

Rob. Let her alone. She better knows than you.
Without a little frost, a summer comes
With half a welcome.

Char. Sir? What would you say?
I think, or I'm deceived, you spoke just now.
Well, sir?

John. [*At a loss.*] The day is marvellously fine.

Char. 'Tis June, sir.

John. June! So is it! Then the day
May well be fine without a miracle.

Char. And yet for June the day is fine.

John. 'Twas that

I meant to say!

Char. A breezy day!

John. It is

A breezy day.

Char. Though warm.

John. Though warm.

Char. A day,

Methinks, to walk. Do you like walking, sir?

[*Putting her arm through his.*]

John. Much; very much. It is a passion with me!

I love to walk—luxuriate in a walk!

And I walk well! So, please your ladyship,

If there's one thing wherein I most excel,

'Tis walking.

Char. I should like to learn of you.

John. When? I'm ready any time.

Char. Why, now;

Since I have placed my arm—I trust with leave—

In yours.

John. Now be it then. How proud I am

To wait upon your ladyship. I live

Only to please your sex.

Char. You flatter us.

John. Nay, Lady Blanche, 'tis simple honesty—

Mere honesty. If there's a quality

Whereon, above all others, I presume—

Char. You need not tell me, Colonel Blount—I know—

Am sure—could swear it. 'Tis your honesty. [*They go out.*]

SCENE II.—*The Antechamber to a Ball-Room.*

Enter LADY BLANCHE.

Lady Bl. He knows me not at all!—His memory,

Far as concerns me, is a perfect blank,

And in his heart not e'en a spark remains,

To mind me of the love he bore me, when

I seem'd a yeoman's maid. She is forgot,

But I'll avenge her! and enslave his heart

Before he knows his danger. Twice or thrice

We spoke in passing. In his eye I saw

No witness to the charms which all allow!—

But soon shall he attest them to his cost.

He comes!—I'll hold him, now, spite of himself;

Find out his vulnerable part. All men

That have free hearts are somewhere vulnerable!—

Propitiate his vanity, his pride,
Humour—whate'er sways uppermost! and then
Right to his heart, and win the citadel,
Which, mine, who lists may take.—He comes!—In thought!

Enter COLONEL BLOUNT.

Well, Colonel Blount, I saw you dance just now.
Come, sir, sit down, and tell me how you liked
Your partner, sir—A special friend of mine!

Col. Blount. A lady worthy praise.

Lady Bl. Did you admire

Her diamonds?—Mine are paragons to them! [*Aside.*

They are very rich!—Perhaps you do not care
For gems?—No more do I!—But what of that?

The world does! What are you and I against

The world?—I know what you would say! One's self

May be one's world, or one may light upon

Another self, outweighs the world! That self

When I shall find, farewell the world for me!

The diamonds I could prize were shining thoughts,

Mined in the heart of one that I could love!

[*Aside.*] A shaft shot straight and should go home—He's
struck!

If struck, he should be stung! The deer is charm'd;

The skill I try on him, I throw away!

I'll give it over! At the first shot? No,

The quiver yet is full. What ponders he?

[*Aloud.*] Where are your thoughts, sir?

Col. Blount. Lady, close at hand,

Whene'er you call them to attend upon you.

Lady Bl. Attendance, willing, waits not to be call'd,

But still forestalls the summons, still attends!

Not that I claim such servitude from one

That's but my new acquaintance! By-and-by

Perhaps I may be more observed—and more

May wish to be so. There are scores of men

Who watch my looks, to worm my wishes from them,

And do them ere they are told! But what are scores,

That don't include the unit which we want?

Found I that unit, farewell scores of scores—

Nay, farewell millions! It were more to me!

I think the day will come—nay, I believe

'Tis nearer than I thought it yesterday,

When first I made your fair acquaintance, sir!

[*Aside.*] The man's a stock? He cannot hear! I'll try

If he can see! [*Aloud.*] Where are your thoughts again?

Col. Blount. Here, madam, your retainers.

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] Such retainers

Might wait upon my grandmother for me!

[*Aloud.*] The lady's forehead you were dancing with,

They say, a strong resemblance bears to mine.

Does it? 'Tis not so high by half an inch.

Well, sir?

Col. Blount. I am thinking, madam.

Lady Bl. [Aside.] Thinking, when
He should be looking! Where are the man's eyes?
Poring upon his feet—and mine beside them!

Col. Blount. I own I cannot see the likeness.

Lady Bl. [Aside.] I
Should wonder if you did! [*Aloud.*] I do not think
Our foreheads much alike—mine, I believe,
Somewhat exceeds in height! Do you think it does?

Col. Blount. I think it does, a little.

Lady Bl. [Aside.] Half an inch
A little in the forehead! Pshaw! He knows not
What he is saying! [*Aloud.*] Sir, are you listening to me?

Col. Blount. With all my ears!

Lady Bl. Then all, I fear, all lack!
[*Aside.*] I must transfix him with my arms! They say
That that same lady has surpassing arms!

Col. Blount. She wears surpassing bracelets!

Lady Bl. Like you not
A lady should wear bracelets?

Col. Blount. I like nothing,
Would supersede the handiwork of Nature!
Why mask the graceful wrist? Stopp'd Nature there,
Instead of going on consummately
To the fair finish, what would you have said?
Art is a gracious handmaid to work on,
Where her high mistress, Nature, fails; but thence
Is a poor critic who but shames himself
Improving what's complete!

Lady Bl. [Aside.] He is roused at last!
I have found his vein. He shall not nod again.

[*Aloud.*] My bracelets hurt.—The clasps are very stiff.

I pray you help me take them off! I'll never
Wear them again.—Now, sir, your eyes are mine. [*Aside.*]

Col. Blount. [Holding her hand, and contemplating the bracelet.] 'Tis wonderful!

Lady Bl. [Aside.] He perches and is limed!—My saucy
linnet!

How light you made just now of the poor bush,
A spray of which has caught you!

Col. Blount. [Still holding, &c.] Art, beat that!

Lady Bl. [Aside.] She can't!

Col. Blount. [Still holding her hand.] Or find the thing that
will comprise

Such richness in ten thousand times the space!

Lady Bl. [Aside.] He has found out at last I have an arm!
We'll live in hopes he will find out, anon,
I have a face as well!

Col. Blount. Why, carats thus
Might weigh almost 'gainst kingdoms.

Lady Bl. [Aside.] Carats!—What
Have arms to do with carats?

Col. Blount. Multiply
The grains of each of these a thousand-fold,
And let the bulk grow with them, you will have
The income of an empire in the space
That spans this little wrist!

Lady Bl. Mean you my diamonds?
Sir, you were prentice to a lapidary!

Col. Blount. I know I was.

Lady Bl. Then, having left your craft,
You should forget it.

Col. Blount. 'Twas an honest one;
And, though I loved it not, I blush not for it!

Lady Bl. What kind of man is this?—I am forgetful!

[Aside.]

I have been ungenerous and ask your pardon!

Col. Blount. Pardon!—O no!—impossible!—a lady
Must never ask for pardon!

Lady Bl. You forgive me?

Col. Blount. I will when you offend me!

Lady Bl. Then we are friends.

Col. Blount. Then I am happy!

Lady Bl. You are a soldier, sir.

Tell me of your exploits. I love brave men,
And hear their deeds with pleasure.

Col. Blount. Had I deeds
To speak of, I had rather others told them.

Lady Bl. Come, sir, what is a battle?

Col. Blount. Glory, madam,
In a just cause; but, at the best, bought dearly
When men destroy their brother men, like them
Framed in the image of their common Maker!

Lady Bl. You would fight again?

Col. Blount. I would, to serve my country!
But should be glad, she needed not such service.
We must have wars, if others will provoke us,
And ever then, I trust, act gallantly,
As men that loathe aggression!—but, I hope,
That golden age will come—'tis promised us,—
When men will fear their God and live like men,
To brutes resigning carnage!

Lady Bl. [Aside.] He o'ertowers me
In all he thinks and feels;—I grow to fear him!
He has his weaknesses!—who is without them?
I'll find them out! He is nothing but a man!—
Soldiers live merrily, they say, in quarters—
[Aloud.] You don't refuse your glass!

Col. Blount. Nor yet abuse it;
Unless, perhaps a joyous time or two,
When men make holiday, and open hearts
Would shut, at my defection—yet e'en then,

Keep somewhat within compass!—Do believe me,
And, for my credit, press me not too closely.

Lady Bl. [Aside.] How honest is he! if I prove him further,

I almost fear to find myself a knave!

Yet I'll go on! [*Aloud.*—Soldiers, I have heard, love play.
You play?

Col. Blount. At times; and then for the suspense
That chance creates—that mistress none can fix,
Who from the sharper's clasp escapes as well
As his who woos her with fair gallantry!
I never gamble.

Lady Bl. How can you refrain?

Col. Blount. With thought of what a paltry act it is!
To say the least, it never can consist
With proper manhood, to enjoy the thing
Was not one's own an hour ago, and chance,
Not his own merit, now has won him! Then,
To wax rich by another's poverty!
My pillow, for the sleep, it gives me,
To rob another man's!—How could I lay
My head upon it?—when I feast, the bread
That loads my board, to leave another's bare,
Ay of a crust perhaps!—How could I touch it?
To go abroad and show the generous sun
My fulness, at such destitution bought,
As robs that sun of light and heat to one
Who yesterday rejoiced in them and bless'd them!
Can he who games have feeling?—Yes, he may!
But better in my mind he had it not!
For I esteem *him* preferable far,
In rate of manhood, that has not a heart;
To him that has, and makes vile use of it!
The one is traitor unto nature, which
The other can't be call'd!—Were it my lot
In some unguarded moment of caprice,
Forgetfulness, or aught that renders one
Unlike one's self—Were it in such a lapse
My lot to win a fortune—ere I slept
I must disgorge my gains, that the next day
I might awake a man!

Lady Bl. [Aside.] He is a man!

Where am I?—What am I about? I fear
I have found a master where I sought a slave.
Heigho!—methinks I could look up to him,
Give him obedience, would he in exchange
Give me his heart!—But is it his to give?
I'll try, yet fear to try!—[*Aloud.*] Soldiers are lovers;
Some men are women-haters—are you one?

Col. Blount. I honour women.

Lady Bl. But I spoke of *loving*.

Ser. All men love; yet, love not all alike.

Some men love lightly, others seriously,
Some last, some change—which way of these love you?

Col. Blount. Indeed you puzzle me!

Lady Bl. You are afraid

To answer!

Col. Blount. No!—If you will take my answer—
I love for ever, if I love at all!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] I see!—He never loved the yeoman's maid,
[*Aloud.*] What call you loving?

Col. Blount. Blissful cherishing!
Of our own happiness, that makes a casket
Wherein to keep a treasured other's safe!
He who loves lightly does not love at all;
He only thinks he loves!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] So loved he when
He loved the yeoman's maid!

Col. Blount. There is more of Heaven
In that sweet mood than such a man e'er dream'd of!
Love lightly!—Love is nothing, if its root
Pierces the surface only of the heart!
It must dive to the core, then what will pluck it out
With fibres so embedded! It may happen
The object is forgetful; but what then,
If 'tis found out too late?—The soil hath given
Its richest spirits to the growth—'Tis spent!—
I don't believe that heart can love again!
I am sure it cannot!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] He will steal my heart
Before my face, and all against my will;
Nor give me hold of his.—I must break off
This converse! [*Aloud.*] Sir, I thank you for the time
You have wasted on me! We have talk'd of trifles,
But pleasantly—nay, very pleasantly!
You are going? A good night—a kind good night.
I am glad of your acquaintance—we'll shake hands—
If you please? I have tired you, have I not?—Don't answer;
I know you must deny.

Col. Blount. I do so frankly.

Lady Bl. I thank you frankly then, and so good night.

[*COLONEL BLOUNT goes out.*]

How changed I feel!—I do not know myself!
Changed? He shall change! I'll bring him to his knee!
I wonder what he thinks of me? I'll plan
A snare for him, shall show me.—He did not kiss
My hand!—and, when I gave it him, almost
I held it to his lips!—One thing is certain,
The yeoman's maid is free to love for him!
How I deceived myself, to think, one moment,
The man was any other than a man!
How very soon I have disabused myself!
To-morrow shall unfold!—not kiss my hand!
I could have sworn he would have kiss'd my hand! [*Goes out.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The House of LADY ANNE.—A Room.*

Enter LADY ANNE.

Lady A. He thrives beyond my hopes! Leave an old maid
Alone to make a man, reforming him
After the fashion, likes her. Women prate
Who talk of conquest while they stoop to love!
What's sway for sway but mere equality
Wherein the party least deserves to rule—
And that, past all dispute, is man, the lord!—
Ne'er rests till he disturbs the perfect poise,
Into his own scale throws his might—that good
Wherein the brute hath mastery o'er him—
And to the beam heaves up the counter one,
To hang there at his will!—Had women but
The thews of men! My very girlhood solved
The riddle of their sovereignty!—Brought up
With two male cubs of cousins, was not I
A likely one the relative deserts
Of women and of men to put to proof?
And didn't I?—I beat them to a stand!
We started all together! Where were they
When I could read?—Why, in the spelling-book!
When I was in subtraction where were they?
A cudgelling their brains to cast a sum
Of ten lines in addition! I could rhyme
My tables backwards, while they fought with pounds,
Shillings and pence, that kept the upper hand
And laugh'd at them for masters! I could parse,
While they on footing of most shy acquaintance
Kept with their parts of speech! In one thing only
I found I met my betters—and e'en there
I tried them, though I came off second best—
I could not beat them when they quarrell'd with me!
Because they held my hands!—They were afraid
To fight me!—But Sir Philip thrives apace,
And all of my performing!—And what pains
He takes to please me, with his air, his gait,
His dress, and most of all his books! How fond
He is of study! I'll do all I can
To encourage him!—At last, he'll make a man!

Enter JANE.

Well, Jane.

Jane. One asks to see your ladyship,
Whose forward manners call his years most backward.
He looks but twenty, may you trust his chin,

But should be thirty and no minute wasted.
 He told his will, nor gave me time to answer,
 But, making of his arms a pillory,
 Began to kiss me, madam! Smack on smack,
 Quick as the clapper of the 'larum bell,
 That ne'er gives o'er before the weight is down,
 Like him who still held on, till out of breath!

Lady A. Hadst not a tongue, girl, to let loose upon him?

Jane. I had, my lady; but my lips were stopp'd.

Lady A. But when your lips were free!

Jane. The harm was done!

Lady A. I will not see him!

Jane. He is at the door!

Lady A. Shut it! Go ring the bell!

Lady Bl. [Entering, disguised as a man.] And if she does,
 I'll ring the changes on her lips again.

Lady A. Go call my footmen!

Lady Bl. If she bears them spite,—

For I shall trounce them soundly, if they come;

I'll ring the bell; but mark the consequence,

Footmen or maids, I'll kiss you spite of them,

Before their faces! Be they maids that come,

I'll kiss the maids as well.—You see my mood;

So, be you squeamish, take me by yourself

And leave the bell alone!

Jane. Shall I ring, my lady?

Lady A. No, don't!

Lady Bl. You hear!—You mark?—You know your cue?

You have not been yon lady's maid in vain?

You're of no use!—Why loiter here!—Begone!

Lady A. I can command my maid myself!

Lady Bl. You can!

But better, now, that I command than you;

For on rebellion clearly is she bent,

Seeing her absence leaves us two alone!

By all the arrows ever Cupid shot,

By all the hearts that ever rued his bow,

Thou art jealous of thy mistress!

Jane. Sir!

Lady Bl. Thou art!

Thou wouldst we still were standing in the hall;

Thou wouldst my errand there were still to tell;

Thou wouldst the vails I gave thee in advance

Were still to pay—yea, thou wouldst give them back

To have them paid again! I am willing—but

There is a time—there is a place—and this

Is neither place, nor time—avoid thee, then!

For, were my love the fraught of twenty men,

Yet of one man I cannot well make two,

And though the lady's beauty tracks the maid's,

Yet must the lady's self precedence take!

So, Fondness!—leave the room!—Nay then—

Jane. [*Retreating from* LADY BLANCHE.] I am gone. [*Goes out.*]

Lady A. How Wrong may thrive by sheer audacity,
While, with amaze, Propriety gives way
Before the thing she scorns!

Lady Bl. Give me a kiss!

Lady A. A kiss!—I never yet gave kiss to man!

Lady Bl. You have kiss'd me many a time! Women forget
Their girlhood days! Their lofty age o'erlooks
Such tiny things!

Lady A. Kiss'd thee!

Lady Bl. When we have stroll'd
Along green lanes in honeysuckle time,
With thrilling throats, mocking the merry birds;
When we have chased each other 'mong the sheaves,
Whose ears have lent us gold to make us crowns;
When, forced to keep the house in winter, of
Our plays we have made fires to warm ourselves;
Or when we have coax'd spring on with primroses,
Till hedge-rows leaved, and trees were all a-bloom!
I have kiss'd thee all these times, not to recount
How often we have sat on the same chair,
Or made a chair of one another's lap,
On the same carpet roll'd—slept in one bed!

Lady A. [*Shrieks.*] Ah!

Lady Bl. You may shriek.—There was no shrieking then—
In short, were comites more than hand or glove,
For still were we together!—Kiss me, Anne!

Lady A. Hoa! help!

Lady Bl. Why don't you know me, simpleton?

Lady A. Blanche!

Lady Bl. [*Bowing.*] At your service.

Lady A. What may this forebode?

Lady Bl. Why, victory! I cannot tell thee now
I came to put my masquerade to proof!

Lady A. 'Tis excellent!

Lady Bl. And so, in verity
You took me for a man!

Lady A. In verity.

Lady Bl. The dress becomes me?—Eh?

Lady A. To admiration!

Lady Bl. Is not my carriage very like a man's?
Have I not caught his tyrant strut?

Lady A. You have!

Lady Bl. The style with which he bears his empty head?

Lady A. You have!

Lady Bl. His frown when he would scare a man?

Lady A. You have!

Lady Bl. His smile when he would please a woman?

Lady A. You have!

Lady Bl. When thus I poise me on one foot,
Planting at ease the other, with one hand

In my breast, the other at my side, with arm
Akinbo, say, you were not in my secret,
Would you not take your oath I was a man?

Lady A. I would!

Lady Bl. 'Twill do! Kiss me, dear Anne, again!

Lady A. I hear a step.

Lady Bl. Keep quiet, will you, Anne!

Jane. [Running on.] Madam—O la!

[Stopping short at seeing LADY ANNE with her head on
LADY BLANCHE'S shoulder, while LADY BLANCHE
kisses her.

Lady Bl. How envy stops her breath!

You need not go—We do not mind you—Well!

Your errand—if you have one? Much I doubt

'Twas jealousy that brought you back again!

Lady A. [Still lolling on LADY BLANCHE.] What is it,
Jane?

Lady Bl. You see we're quite at home

With one another. Well, what is it, sweetheart!

Jane. Sir Philip Brilliant waits to see my lady.

Lady Bl. Show him up stairs.

Jane. Well, if I ever dream'd—

Lady Bl. She scarce can move for very spite—Begone!
[JANE goes out.]

Lady A. What shall be done?

Lady Bl. Done?—Let them show him up!

I am sure I make as good a man as he is!

How changed Sir Philip is!—How grave he grows!

I half believe my empire there is done!—

Why staid you yester' evening from the ball?—

I ne'er saw man so alter'd as Sir Philip!

He thinks! He does! Looks pensive, as I live!

What brings him here, dear Anne?

Lady A. [Hesitating.] To learn of me

How to make love to you.

Lady Bl. Learn to make love

To me! How long since you have open'd school?

You ne'er gave lesson on that art, before!

But wit does wonders, on emergency!—

Anne!—They say teachers learn the while they teach!

Take care!—Amerecy, where's your old maid's dress?

What do you teach Sir Philip?

Lady A. We read Latin

Together.

Lady Bl. Anne!—I can translate your Latin

Better than you can. Here your pupil comes!

Enter SIR PHILIP.

An o'ergrown boy, methinks, to go to school!

But such a one, if once he takes to tasks,

Makes progress.—Pays he thee in coin or kind?

Coin!—No such item in the schedule broad
Of love's estate, composed of things as light
As sunshine!—air!—the odour air exhales!
The softest sound it lends its limber wing!
Not that it always, yet, escheweth things
More tangible, begot of hands and lips!
Farewell! I never saw so clear a dawn!

Lady A. Dawn? It is day.

Lady Bl. 'Tis dawn, will grow to day!
I tell thee, Anne, 'twas e'en Aurora's self
That now I spied—that early, modest maid,
Who opens the curtains of the sleeping sun,
And, blushing, flies his gaze! Permit my lips
To press your hand.—Now, mark my bow! [*Aside.*] Adieu!

[*LADY BLANCHE bows to SIR PHILIP, and goes out.*]

Sir Phil. [*Uneasily.*] A handsome youth!

Lady A. Umph! Well enough!

Sir Phil. He seems
An old acquaintance, for he kiss'd your hand
Right lovingly!

Lady A. I have known him rather long.

Sir Phil. I would I had not come!

Lady A. Why, prithee?

Sir Phil. As
My call was out of time.

Lady A. Not so, Sir Philip,
The gentleman was just about to go.

Sir Phil. I am glad I came not sooner.

Lady A. Had you, sir,
'Twere all the same to me—save that the pleasure
Of seeing you had been some minutes older!

Sir Phil. You make me happy.

Lady A. What's the matter with him?
Sir Philip cannot be in love with me!

Yet Lady Blanche would so insinuate—

Hang her! To note my cheek!—It had not burn'd

Except through her!—Why, what a world it is!

What wicked thoughts come into people's heads!

Behoves I watch myself!—We meet too often!

We are too much alone—O far too much!

His tasks must end, if he begins to love!

He has not told me so!—I'll wait till then!

I wonder was he pensive, as she said!

Or did she fancy it? Sir Philip.

Sir Phil. Madam?

Lady A. I pray you, how went off the ball last night?

Sir Phil. Oh, admirably well!

Lady A. I knew it! She

Was jesting! I hate jests! Nine times in ten

They are out of season! 'Twas a pleasant evening?

Sir Phil. Very!

Lady A. I knew it!—What can change a man

In a moment!—Can he doff himself as soon
As his coat? The days of miracles are over!
And so you pass'd a very pleasant evening?
Whom danced you with—the Countess?

Sir Phil. Nobody.

Lady A. You play'd at cards—who was your partner? She?

Sir Phil. No one.

Lady A. They gave you music?—You can sing:
I have heard you sing a second to the Countess—
A capital second!—I was pleased with it,
That am not moved with trifles!—Did you sing
Last night together?

Sir Phil. No; I sang with no one.

Lady A. A solo then?

Sir Phil. I did not sing at all!

Lady A. Singing is very well in its way; but many
Love conversation better.

Sir Phil. Very many!

Lady A. For mine own part, give me a corner with
A friend I love to talk with, and the song
May hold its peace for me!

Sir Phil. I feel as you do!

Lady A. The Countess can talk well.

Sir Phil. Surprisingly—

Lady A. When she likes it. Was she in the vein last
night?

Sir Phil. I did not note!—I saw not much of her.
I was not in the vein for company.

Lady A. Pray you, Sir Philip, who were at the ball?

Sir Phil. Upon my word, I scarce remember who!
I better could recall who was not there!

Lady A. Who was not there?

Sir Phil. Why, you!

Lady A. [*Aside.*] That sounds like love!
'Tis well I be upon my guard in time!

Repel the foe, before he can make head!

Yet to be like a thing is not to be

The thing itself! It may not, yet, be love.

The enemy I take up arms against

Myself may conjure up!—alarums sound,

Where no attack is meant?—That would be hard

On him!—to lose, without a crime, the friend

He stands so much in need of—then the credit

I must forego, if I forego the task

I took in hand, to make a man of him!

See how he cons his lesson like a boy!

[*Aloud.*] Get the desk ready—I shall follow you.

Sir Phil. Here is a passage, like to master me.

Each word I know, yet can't divine the sense!

Lady A. Show it me. Dear Sir Philip, you forget

Your syntax! Here is an ellipsis, sir!

Sir Phil. An ellipsis?

Lady A. Yes; look at that genitive!
 It stands alone! What governs it, Sir Philip?
Sir Phil. The noun is understood!—I have found the sense;
 Yet wits more quick, miss seeing things as plain! [*Sighs.*]
Lady A. [*Aside.*] What does he mean?
Sir Phil. The want is profit to me,
 That makes me need instructress, such as you are,
 And wins her for me—through compassion, only!
 I progress!—Will gets through a heap of work!
 Dear Lady Anne, I love to read with you! [*Goes out.*]
Lady A. He loves to read with me! Were it charity
 If that I construed into loving me?
 He stands too much in awe of me to love me!
 But, say he does—what business is't of mine?
 Let him look to it—I have not the fever!
 He caught it not from me! I'm in sound health,
 Was never half so well! My mind sees clearer!
 My heart feels lighter. I am twice myself——
 He loves not any one!—or if he does,
 'Tis clear as open day 'tis not the Countess! [*Goes out.*]

SCENE II.—COLONEL BLOUNT'S *House.*—*A Room.*

Enter COLONEL BLOUNT.

Col. Blount. Mine honour'd parents have I seen at last!
 Received their welcome with their blessing crown'd!
 My brother mocks my search—and so does she
 Whom to have lost, makes loss of fortune's gains.
 Nor hope nor clue to hope! The house, whereat
 We used to meet, hath other tenant got,
 The former gone they know not whither,—if
 Alive or dead! For hours and hours I walk
 The streets in vain! she never crosses me.
 I light on all the world but her I seek!

Enter WILLIAM.

Wil. A gentleman would speak with you.

Col. Blount. His name?

Wil. I ask'd his name, and in reply he told me
 Again his errand—wonder'd how my master
 Could keep a male attendant at his door,
 And maids to hire in bunches!—any one
 Of whom could draw the bolt as well!—would look
 A thousand times more pleasing—speak more sweetly,
 And, maybe, when a pretty fellow call'd,
 With kisses season answers—then with a stamp
 Dismiss'd me.

Lady Bl. [*Entering, still disguised.*] Colonel Blount, your
 humble servant!
 Place chairs! excuse the freedom! I am at home

Whene'er I light upon a gentleman ;
 And you, I know, are one !—You know your place, sir,
 And know, of course, the way to it—which, as
 I take it, is the hall !—you understand me ?
 The hall ! [*WILLIAM goes out.*] Your servant, Colonel Blount,
 again !

Col. Blount. You know me, sir ?

Lady Bl. A man beloved of fame, sir,
 Is known to many, who are strange to him.
 I own that I make bold ! but keep your frown
 Until I give my reason. Colonel Blount,
 Some men make bold through fear, some through the lack
 on't.

Some to seem honest—for the adage runs,
 That knavery puts on a glossy suit
 While honesty goes rough !—and some make bold
 Through lightness of clear hearts, and wantonness
 Of healthy frankness !—I am such a man !
 To free your mind at once from jealousy,
 If not to win your confidence, I tell you
 I wait on you—touching a lady, sir !—
 He takes it very coolly. [*Aside.*] Colonel Blount,
 I wait on you, touching a lady, sir !

Col. Blount. I heard you, sir—I am not deaf.

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] As well
 Be deaf as dull. The lady, sir, I am sure,
 By certain signs affects you—and, aware
 How through reserve, or self mistrust, or something,
 Hearts, form'd to mingle, oft miss one another ;
 And being of the lady's blood moreover,
 And knowing you, by fame, a man of honour,
 The secret I have guess'd, sir, I have come
 To tell you, sir.

Col. Blount. Well, sir ?

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] The man's a stock !
 "Well, sir !"—shall I go on ? I will !—but only
 Because I have begun. Whom reckon you
 The beauty of the court ?

Col. Blount. The beauty ?

Lady Bl. [*Off her guard.*] Well ?

Col. Blount. Your patience, sir, I am not skill'd in beauty ;
 Perhaps I may mistake.

Lady Bl. [*Again off her guard.*] You do not know
 The beauty of the court ?

Col. Blount. To say the truth,
 I lay light value upon beauty only.
 Then is it hard to say what beauty is.
 You like the Roman outline, I the Grecian—
 Where's beauty ? Beauty, may I trust report,
 Hath somewhat questionable reputation, too !
 Some say it is intolerably proud ;
 Some, empty—full of nothing but itself ;

Some, by no means good-temper'd—some assert
 'Tis mercenary, and not over honest.
 This may, in part, be spleen, but part is truth.
 Whence am I jealous of what men call beauty;
 And own it—but when beauty, modestly,
 Attends the mind, like a fair handmaiden
 Who knows her place, and serves a noble mistress,
 Then could I worship beauty, sir; for then
 Its proper worth not only doffs no favour,
 But wins enhancement from the worth it waits on!

Lady Bl. Had you not, Colonel Blount, some time or other,
 A falling out with beauty? Come! You had;
 She slighted you, one time—I know she did!
 But 'twas your own fault—I'll be bound it was!
 You did not manage well, sir. You were proud—
 Lack'd patience—maybe, art—and, never dreaming
 That beauty's smiles go oft in masquerade,
 Took one for a frown, and off!—when, had you farricd,
 The thing you thought a frown had proved a smile,
 As the dull morning breeds the sunny day.
 I know the sex! There is not one of them
 But's art in something!

Col. Blount. Do not say, not one!

Lady Bl. [*Forgetting herself.*] I say, not one! What know
 you of the sex?

What knows this man—that man—or any man—
 Of the sex? Is it not plain to all the world,
 A girl, at fifteen is, in wit a woman?
 And what's a man at twenty but a boy?
 When I was only thirteen—

Col. Blount. Sir!—

Lady Bl. Nay, sir,
 Don't interrupt me!—When I was but thirteen—

[*Recovering herself.*]

I had an aunt who loved me passing well,
 And lest I should be overmatch'd by women,
 School'd me in all their arts.—You never had
 An aunt like her, nor any other man.
 Whence I disparaged you—I beg your pardon!

Col. Blount. 'Tis granted freely.

Lady Bl. I am beholden to you;
 And, more to be so, would entreat you own,
 If when I challenged you to name just now
 The beauty of the court, you entertain'd not
 Suspicion of the lady?

Col. Blount. Not the least!

Lady Bl. Why, Colonel Blount, you are not blind! You
 know
 Who has the fairest skin, the finest hair—
 The finest features, finest shoulders, arms
 And wrists, and hands.

Col. Blount. Stop, sir!

Lady Bl. I meant to stop;
For if by these you fail to recognise her,
The lady's waist, her ancles, and her feet
Were thrown away upon you!

Col. Blount. I but stopp'd you
To say I know the Countess, Lady Blanche!

Lady Bl. Well, sir?

Col. Blount. Well, sir?

Lady Bl. I come on her account.

Col. Blount. You are welcome, sir, upon your own account!
Your pleasure?

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] I could brain him, so I could!

[*Aloud.*] She is the lady whom I spoke of, sir!—

[*Aside.*] Oh, marble! Is it true you see and hear?

I'll speak out plainly! [*Aloud.*] Sir, I think 'tis time

The Countess married?—What think you?

Col. Blount. Indeed
I never thought about it!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] I could sell him
To slavery!—'Tis a fine lion, though,
Of which I'd give my eyes to have the taming!

[*Aloud.*] I think 'tis time a woman marries when
She takes a fancy to a man!

Col. Blount. That plight,
Methinks, can scarce befall the Countess, sir!
The lady is enamour'd of herself!
She cannot love another!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] I could be
The death of him. [*Aloud.*] What would you wager now,
She is not in love with you? You know the signs
A woman is in love? She has them all, sir!
Thinks much, speaks little, sighs incontinently,
Falls off in appetite, hates company,
Shuns pleasure, loves to pass the time alone,
Makes of one hand a pillow for her cheek,
One, for her heart, of the other—sitting thus
For hours together!—Is not that the picture
Of one in love? And if you come to tears,
She could weep rivers, would she—but give me
The drop, could turn into a flood, but won't—
Hangs on the lid, as though 'twould fall, but doesn't;
Seems as 'twould ever stay there, but is gone
You know not how nor whither!

Col. Blount. You surprise me!
I saw the Countess at the ball last night—
Look'd never woman better!

Lady Bl. Look'd!—

Col. Blount. I know
She paints.

Lady Bl. Paints, sir?

Col. Blount. She does! 'Tis clear
As that she breathes and moves.

Lady Bl. Does that offend you ?

Col. Blount. Sir, I'll be frank ! I love not simulation,
Nor can believe it may be practised safely
E'en in as small a thing as that we speak of !
'Tis well when she who paints confesses it ;
Yet she confesses vanity besides,
Which is *not* well. But, for the other sort,
Women who pass a cheek for what it is not ;
I always fear'd the probity, within,
Would follow that without ; and thoughts and words
Might wear a hue that was not native to them.
For, if one fraud will blast a character,
What follows but that honesty is perfect,
Or nothing ?—holds throughout ?—is everywhere
Or nowhere ?—I refer to actions !—'Tis
Their actions which determine what men are !
Whate'er of me men see, must be myself ;
What I myself can see—I do not mean
To advertise my heart—that is no man's duty—
I have my weakness, I'm not bound to own—
Before it masters me !—but, by my honour,
I take no credit for the grace I have not !

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] 'Tis a strange man !—a man of a new species !

[*Aloud.*] Well, sir, she paints !—What else ?—What other fault
Do you find with her face ? Her colour you dispute,—
Perhaps you'll grant her eyes to be her own,
And they are counted fine ones !

Col. Blount. They are bold ones !

Lady Bl. Bold ones !—You do not like their fire, perhaps ?
You should not, could it scorch you ! [*Aside.*]

Col. Blount. Not their fire
Do I complain of. 'Tis the mood that lights it
I quarrel with !

Lady Bl. What mood ? [*Aside.*] I grow to hate him !

Col. Blount. The mood of the coquette—whom on my honour

I hold 'mongst women an anomaly !
For, much as you disparaged woman, now,
Making her creature more or less of art ;
I think, if not in her, then nowhere, else,
Is truthful nature found ; for she is framed
Of elements she needs not blush to own,
Being of the temper less of earth than heaven !
And which, perforce, establish her sincere—
Pitiful—modest—and, surpassing all,
Single in love, which is Heaven's prototype !
Her love is love ! Therein she is a barque
Sea-worthy 'gainst all weathers !—likelier
Than any prow, that ever quitted port,
To make her voyage, whatsoe'er the wind,
And, if it blows, to ride the tempest through !

Lady Bl. He is not so bad! How handsome look'd he now,
More than his features warrant him, as though
The charm of beauty lay not in the face!

Col. Blount. Now, what has a coquette, to such a being
Pertaining? Form and feature! Nothing more!
Of woman the least part! She cannot love;
For woman, loving, cannot breathe or move,
Or think, or feel, but love's in all she does!
And, saying that she cannot love, say what
She can do, to her honour will redound?
I know not, sir; do you?

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] Yes; she can hate,
And heartily.—Why, what a fright I took
For a good-looking man!

Col. Blount. The Countess now——

Lady Bl. So please you, we shall speak no more about her!
[*Aside.*] I wonder is he smit with any other—

[*Aloud.*] Excuse a question, sir!—Are you in love?

Col. Blount. Yes, sir, I am—but love, I fear, in vain.

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] In vain? Some prude, perhaps, has
snared his heart.

I hope she has! [*Aloud.*] Is not your love return'd?

Col. Blount. I know not!—I would fain believe it was!

Lady Bl. Believe it was?—What! dropp'd she never word
That Hope could make a meal of?

Col. Blount. Never.—Silence

Was still her answer when I press'd my suit.

Lady Bl. A prude, as I'm alive! a thorough prude!

I know what kind of maid your mistress is!

She keeps you at great distance!—plucks away

Her hand, if you press it—if you strive to keep

Her waist in durance, sets the measure of

The room 'twixt you and her; and would you kiss her,

Prepares to shriek!—You should make trial of her!

She understands your humour! I'll be bound

It is a prude you love!

Col. Blount. You wrong her, sir!

She is no prude! No freedom—you have named

I ever took with her, or dared to take!

Lady Bl. Or dared to take! I told you, Colonel Blount,

You knew not women. Dragons, sir, are fables!

So used my aunt to say—and she went further;

Where'er you think you see one, set it down

'Tis whalebone-work and buckram; which, without

The fear of sting or flame, you may engage,

And find more peace than you imagined fury!

Dear Colonel Blount, you love a prude, and think

You have found a miracle of modesty!

Col. Blount. No more, sir!

Lady Bl. Colonel Blount, you love a prude!

'Tis ever thus with men particular;

Men that in squeamishness would outdo women!

That knit a brow at this, and shrug at that,

Take shocks at horrors that amount to nothing;
Whom nothing will content except perfection,
Which, when at last they find,—they find they are losers
By many a better thing they met before,
And pass'd in chase of it! I give you joy, sir,
To love a prude.

Col. Blount. Nay, sir—

Lady Bl. Yea, sir; a prude! I see her!—She's before me!—Just the eyes,
I know she has!—the use she makes of them!
How fond they are of the ground! I warrant you
Her thoughts are not of their taste!—Gentle primness!
There is a mouth after your own chaste fancy!
Look at the lips how they hug one another,
Like innocents that cling at thought of parting!—
If I were near them!—What a sober cheek!
Durst ever laughter come there?—I'll be bound
When 'tis alone, or keeping company
With one that understands it! *Colonel Blount,*
I'll court your mistress, and I'll carry her
In a week! She is a prude, fair *Colonel Blount!*

Col. Blount. Hold, sir!—On no account that bears not
proof

Asperse the character of her I love!
Say that I boast because I think her fair,
She can spare beauty! 'Tis her least desert!
But when, in wantonness, you doubt her heart,
Wherein do I, in seriousness, confide—
Which to her beauty is, what, to the earth,
The sun!—the radiant fountain, gives it light;
You tax my patience past what it can bear,
And all the man in me is up in arms!

Lady Bl. [*Aside.*] 'Tis plain he loves—and oh!—how well
he loves!

What is't to me? I feel a sickness which
I never felt before! The world I'd give
To see the woman that has conquer'd him;
I would I were away!—My feign'd part
I have play'd too long, can scarce keep up, and wish,
And heartily, I ne'er had play'd at all!
Up heart and bear me through!—[*Aloud.*] Good day, fair sir,
I thank you for the audience you've vouchsafed!
But wish you had not loved a prude!

Col. Blount. [*Drawing.*] 'Sdeath, sir!

Lady Bl. [*alarmed.*] Stop!—[*Recovering.*] Draw upon me
under your own roof!

Col. Blount. I am corrected! You must pardon me;
But, to keep patience, I must quit the room.

Lady Bl. Farewell, sir—but, believe me, you will find
The lady is a prude!

Col. Blount. Away, sir!

Lady Bl. Prude!

Jilt, shrew, whate'er she is, would I were she!

[*Goes out.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The House of Lady Anne.**Enter JANE and LADY BLANCHE.*

Lady Bl. At home to me! Why not at home to all?
What ails her? Is she ill? When saw she last
Sir Philip?

Jane. Yesterday.

Lady Bl. He was not here
To-day? They have quarrell'd. She's in love with him.
I thought 'twould come to this. Play governess
To a pupil with a beard! Pore cheek-by-cheek
Over a book with him! A score to one
The cheeks would meet. I wonder, then, the odds
The lips would keep asunder.

Jane. You have guess'd it.

Lady Bl. He kiss'd her? How know you?

Jane. I saw it, madam,
Entering the study unawares. Their backs
Were towards me. They were sitting, side by side,
Before the reading-desk, and as I oped
The door, he kiss'd her. She was on her feet
In a moment.

Lady Bl. At the kiss or at the door?

Jane. I'll not be positive.

Lady Bl. But you can guess.
Or if you cannot, I can.—She turn'd round,
And then she quarrell'd with the kiss—Go to!
You have made mischief. 'Twere a welcome kiss,
Had not you look'd upon it. Get you gone,
You have wicked eyes! Go send your lady to me.

[*JANE goes out.*]

My heart is gone! The symptoms yesterday
I feign'd, I feel to-day. To mock, to catch!
So runs the saying, and 'tis true. I mock'd—
Dissembled love for the young 'prentice boy,
And what I pass'd before for, now I am—
A maid indeed in love—in love with him
Who, having leap'd the pale that bade him dwell
Aloof from gentle blood, were now my match;
But he has all forgot the yeoman's maid.

*LADY BLANCHE sits disconsolately. Enter LADY ANNE who
draws a chair beside her, and likewise sits.*

Lady A. Well, Blanche.

Lady Bl. Well, Anne. You have quarrell'd with Sir Philip.

Lady A. And you have lost your pains with Colonel Blount.

Lady Bl. We have play'd our cards like fools.

Lady A. I fear we have.

Lady Bl. I know we have. My game is gone.

Lady A. And so
I fear is mine.

Lady Bl. Why, Anne, you're not in love?

Lady A. I doubt I am. Are you in love, dear Blanche?

Lady Bl. I *know* I am. What could possess you, Anne,
To set yourself up at an age like yours
For an old maid? Would you be wiser than
Your mother was? Had she been of your mind,
Where had you been?

Lady A. What could possess you, Blanche,
To give me credit for't, and you yourself
A woman? Think you there was ever one
Who led a life of single blessedness,
And with her will? Blanche, you forgot your mother,
As I did mine. Children had better take
Example from their parents. They are copies
More like to spoil than mend by altering.

Lady Bl. My mother was a wife at twenty-four.

Past that, I'm like to be no wife at all.

This comes of scorning men. How could you think

Women were e'er design'd to live without them?

Look at men's trades, no woman e'er could follow.

A pretty smith you'd make, to blow a bellows

And set an anvil ringing with a hammer.

Lady A. Or you a pretty mason, with a mallet

Shaping a block of freestone with a chisel!

Lady Bl. You could not be a doctor, nor a surgeon.

Lady A. Nor you a lawyer—would you wear the wig?

Lady Bl. I'd starve first. You would never make a sailor.

Lady A. Nor you a soldier.

Lady Bl. I could fight. I'd like

To fight with Colonel Blount.

Lady A. What! has he chafed you?

Lady Bl. Mortally! Of my beauty made as light,

As 'twere a dress would only wear a day!

Averr'd I painted, which, although I did,

Designing not to show, how durst he see?

Denied that I had eyes. Have I not eyes?

Call'd me coquette, anatomized me so;

My heart is all one mortifying sore.

Rankling with pain, which, 'gainst all equity,

I pay him for with love, instead of hate.

Lady A. Why, Blanche, can it be you?

Lady Bl. Can you believe

That love could be constrain'd? That one could love

Against one's will? That one could spite one's self

To love another? Love and hate at once?

I could kill Colonel Blount—could hack him up!

Make mincemeat of him—and could kill myself

For thinking I could do it, he is so full

Of wisdom, goodness, manliness, and grace!

I honour him, admire him, yea, affect him ;
 Yet, more than him, affect the 'prentice boy,
 Whose blushing cheek attested for his heart
 That love was an unknown, unlook'd-for guest,
 Ne'er entertain'd before ; and greeted, now,
 With most confused, overpow'rd welcome !

Lady A. You loved the 'prentice boy !—you thought not
 that

Before.

Lady Bl. Because it seem'd too slight for thought.
 A spark I did not heed, because a spark,
 Never suspected could engender flame,
 Has kept in secret kindling, not found out
 Until the blaze that, now, keeps raging on,
 As from the smother springs the fiercest fire.

Lady A. Well ! make confession to him.

Lady Bl. Make my will
 And die ! He loves no more ! The fire is out !
 Vanish'd !—The very embers blown away !
 The memory even of my features gone,
 At sight of which it bursts with such a glare
 As crimson'd all the welkin of his face,
 And mock'd, as you would think, extinguishing !
 Nor rests it there—another fire is lit
 And blazes to another deity !

There is the altar, burn'd before for me,
 But to another does the incense rise.
There is the temple where I once was shrined,
 But to another's image sacred now ;
 And mine profaned, unbased, cast down, cast out,
 Never to know its worshipper again !

Lady A. Thou dost not weep.

Lady Bl. I do !

Lady A. You are in love !

Lady Bl. To be sure I am. O ! never women more
 Deceived themselves than we did ! To believe
 It rested with ourselves to love or not ;
 As we, at once, could have and lack a heart ;
 As though we were not made of flesh and blood ;
 As though we were not women—women—skiffs
 Sure to be toss'd by passion as by waves
 The barque that's launch'd into the open sea !
 Why don't you weep ?—you would for sympathy,
 Did you but love as I do.

Lady A. Love as you do !

The loves of twenty women would not make
 The heap of mine.

Lady Bl. And mine among the number ?
 Now look you, Anne, the moiety of my love
 Would make your heap.

Lady A. Would make my heap ? Its tithe
 Would beat your moiety !

Lady Bl. The measure of it?

Lady A. The earth!

Lady Bl. I'll give thee in the sun and moon!

My love holds measure with the universe!

That mocks all bounds.

Lady A. Ne'er woman loved as I do!

Lady Bl. Ne'er woman loved at all, compared to me!

In me the passion, Anne, is nature! What

I feel, you only have a notion of.

I love by heart; you only, Anne, by rote!

Peace, I will have it so! Upon my life

We are a pair of most renown'd old maids!

Enter JANE.

Jane. So please you, madam, have I now your leave?

Lady A. Leave!—Whither go you?—Oh, I had forgot.

I gave her leave to spend the afternoon

With Charlotte, your fair maid.

Lady Bl. She gives a treat

To-day. She begg'd of me a room or two;

I bade her take the freedom of the house,

And with her friends keep holiday, for she

My foster-sister is, as well as maid!

Lady A. Is't not a wedding, Jane?

Jane. I am bound, my lady,

To secrecy.

Lady A. Pshaw! secrecy to me?

Jane. It is a wedding.

Lady A. And whom marries she?

Jane. They tell me Colonel Blount.

Lady Bl. They slander him!

It is impossible!

Lady A. You have your leave!

Go, Jane.

[*JANE goes out.*]

Lady Bl. [*Calling after JANE.*] But go not forth—wait in the ante-room

For me! Behoves I further question her!

Lady A. Would you betray yourself?

Lady Bl. Betray myself!—

I have betray'd myself—I am betray'd

By him, by you,—but, most of all, myself!

There's no accounting for the tastes of men!—

I'll see this wedding!

Lady A. Wherefore?

Lady Bl. Know I not!—

To stop the banns!

Lady A. Play rival to thy maid?

Lady Bl. The maid is betters to the mistress now!

I must be present at these nuptials, Anne!

I think it cannot be as she reports!

And yet, again, I doubt, and fear it is!

If so, I'll see him give away his hand,

And to escape detection from the rest,
 Attire me as the maid he knew me first—
 The yeoman's daughter whom he saw and loved.
 Follow me, Anne, and see how all will end.

Lady A. What profit can it bring thee, proves it he?

Lady Bl. I know not what! I scarce know what I do.
 I have an aim, yet know not what it is!
 I shall expect you, Anne.—Be sure you come!
 Anne, turns it out, as much I fear it will,
 You'll have to answer for't.

Lady A. For what, dear Blanche?

Lady Bl. That I should love, and die a lost old maid.

[*LADY BLANCHE goes out.*]

Lady A. Full of her own predicament, she casts
 No thought on mine. What will become of me,
 Returns not fair Sir Philip to the charge,
 Dishearten'd by repulse which I confess
 I gave him more in show than earnestness?
 That's he!—I know his step!—Come in, Sir Philip!

Enter SIR PHILIP.

Sir Phil. I have made bold to call.

Lady A. I see you have call'd;
 I do not see you have made bold!

Sir Phil. I came
 To ask your pardon.

Lady A. Oh!—for yesterday.
 Yes! I was angry!—you surprised me so!
 It was not *what* you did, but *how* you did it.
 And then my maid to see it!—What knew she
 How you intended it?—Such things—you know
 I view them philosophically—go
 For what they are meant for. There is a father's kiss,
 A brother's kiss, a friend's kiss—and a kiss—
 Of another kind.—You guess the kind I mean—
 Not like the kiss you gave me yesterday.

Sir Phil. I am not sure of that.—Nay, I'll be honest!

Lady A. Do so, Sir Philip! Honesty is a grace
 That makes amends for worlds of awkward things.

Sir Phil. With safety, would I might be honest still.

Lady A. You cannot tell, you know, unless you try!

Sir Phil. Trying, perhaps I fail.

Lady A. Perhaps succeed.

But trying not, be sure you won't succeed.

Sir Phil. Dear Lady Anne, I feel—I know not what.

Lady A. I cannot know unless you tell me what.
 How do you feel?

Sir Phil. Most strangely.

Lady A. And how long?

Sir Phil. Why ever since I came to school to you.
 I am smitten, Lady Anne.

Lady A. What mean you, sir?

Smitten by me? I have not got the plague!
I don't feel ill!—Can I be ailing, sir?
Do you think me ill?—Do you know anything
About the pulse? Feel mine! How am I?

Sir Phil. Nay,
Allow me time to tell.

Lady A. O! take your time!

Sir Phil. A most sweet hand you have, dear Lady Anne.
Here is a palm, and here are fingers too!

Lady A. I hope there are.

Sir Phil. And joints.

Lady A. Who has not palms,
Fingers, and joints, Sir Philip, that has hands?

Sir Phil. But hands that have all these are not the same!
Some will repel, and some attract the touch!
Some will delight, and some offend, the eye.
This palm hath softness, which the eider-down
Were richer if it knew! Those tapering fingers
Are in their dazzling whiteness, and their shape,
Rays far more precious than e'er crown'd a star,
That penetrate the heart with light and warmth
In which the sun is poor!—and here are joints
That mock the cheek with dimples—play on smiles—
As hinges could be fashion'd of such things!
O there's a world of riches in a hand!
Treasures that count with feeling, thought, and sense,
And most of all—in this one.

Lady A. Pray, Sir Philip,
How is my pulse?

Sir Phil. I cannot find your pulse—Can't tell the pulse—
Know nothing of the pulse.—You are quite well;
But I am very ill, dear Lady Anne.

Lady A. Indeed! Sir Philip. Let me try my skill!—
The hand keeps steady while we feel the pulse—
No signs of ailment here.

Sir Phil. No fever?

Lady A. No:
The even-plodding beat of sober health!
And yet thou mayst be ill.—Art rheumatic?

Sir Phil. No.

Lady A. Art thou subject to the quinsy?

Sir Phil. No.

Lady A. Feel'st rigors now and then—the certain signs
Of brooding mischief!

Sir Phil. No.

Lady A. Hadst ever threat'ning
Of a lock'd jaw?

Sir Phil. No!

Lady A. Hast thou got a headache?

Sir Phil. No!

Lady A. If thou'rt ill, it must be somewhere! How
Feel'st thou about the region of the heart?

Sir Phil. 'Tis there, dear Lady Anne; 'tis there!

Lady A. What's there?

Sir Phil. My illness!

Lady A. What, suspect you, is it?

Sir Phil. Love!

Lady A. A dunce!—I might have known it all along!—
Of course!—you are in love with Lady Blanche!

Sir Phil. Nay, Lady Anne, I am in love with you!

Lady A. In love with me! Why, what can I have done
To make you so?

Sir Phil. Nothing, with that intent,
But everything that works to such an end!
Made me—from nothing—which I was,—a man!
Almost a man—your work not yet complete,
But you will crown it, if you marry me.

Lady A. Sir Philip, we shall speak another time.

Sir Phil. That other time will find another yet!
No time like the present, when the cause is good.
And the heart cheerily runs along with it!

Lady A. Give me a day!

Sir Phil. What! with such friends as these
To back me now?

Lady A. What friends?

Sir Phil. Your blushes, lady,
You fain would hide, but cannot!—and your eyes,
O'er which you drop those snowy veils, their lids,
To hide what they would tell—yet, thus, betray;
And your whole form shrinking with consciousness,
Which breathes such fears as fan the lover's hopes.
Dear Lady Anne—

Lady A. Sir Philip, here I am.
And judge me as a man of honour would
The maid he truly loves, and not in vain!
There—you have ta'en possession! Loose me now,
And meet me presently at Lady Blanche's,
Whither by friendship am I summon'd straight!
And should obey, since love's behest is done.

[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE THE LAST.—A Room in LADY BLANCHE'S.

Enter JOHN.

John. The knot is tied!—I am a married man,
And now I wish myself a single one!
Great people do not sort with me, their ways
Are so uncommon! 'Tis a serious thing
To marry! There, throughout the ceremony,
Sir Philip stood, with handkerchief to mouth,
Stifling his laughter; opposite, his friends,

Lords John and Stephen, lords although they be,
Tittering outright, and nudging one another.
Be this the mode with men of quality,
I know, in those beneath them, it would pass
For monstrously bad breeding! But the worst
Is yet to come!—The bride herself must laugh—
Laugh till her sides shook.—Yea, and I, prepared
With a most lovely kerchief for the tears
I thought she would be drown'd in.—'Pon my life,
Great folks are no great things—but I am married!

Rob. [*Entering, handkerchief to mouth.*] What! Col. Blount
alone!—Why, where's your bride?

Gone to recruit her spirits, I suppose,
After the ceremony! 'Twas a most
Affecting one!

John. You found it so.

Rob. I did.

How near akin are moods most opposite!
I vow there's not a pin's point difference
'Twixt tears and laughter.—Nay, 'tis known to all
Grief laughs as oft as weeps.

John. You mean it falls
Into hysterics.

Rob. As I nearly did
To-day.

John. No!

Rob. Yes, as I'm a baronet!
Upon my life!—O, Colonel Blount, how well
You play'd the bridegroom!—so impressively.
I have seen moving things, but ne'er was moved
Before to-day! 'Twas well the clergyman
Was hackney'd in the ceremony, else
He never had got through with it!

John. Say you so?
This is another version of the story!
And did I play the bridegroom movingly?

Rob. The bride, methinks, might satisfy you there.
I am sure I saw her tremble.

John. Tremble?—Shake!

Rob. Indeed? 'Twas well she did not quite go off.

John. I thought 'twas all with mirth.

Rob. Mirth, Colonel Blount!

I wish you could have seen and heard yourself!
You look'd and spoke!

John. How did I speak and look?

Pathetically?

Rob. Spare me, gentle sir,
I lack your constancy!

John. My constancy!

It is my forte!—If there is one thing, sir,
Wherein, among the things that I excel in,
I quite surpass myself, I may aver

It is my constancy. I see it now !
I have a way of speaking serious things,
And doing them, quite of my own !—The bride !

Enter CHARLOTTE, supported by JACOB and STEPHEN.

Permit me, noble friends, how does my wife ?

Char. A little better !

John. Cruel that I was !

The ceremony was too much for you !
And 'twas my fault ! If I had dream'd of it,
I should have skipp'd my share, or rhymed it o'er.

Char. I ne'er heard sermon so affected me,
And I have heard all kinds—charity ones,
And funeral ones—I may have wept at some,
But never was o'erpower'd until to-day !

John. Nay, think of it no more.

Char. Each syllable
Spoke volumes to me.

John. You distress me, love !

Char. I must give vent to what I feel, or drop !

John. Nay then, dear love, speak on.

Char. You certainly
Were destined for the church.

John. O no !

Char. You were !

John. Upon my honour, love, I tell thee no !

Char. The gown and surplice little know their loss !
But stop ! said I the church ?—I meant the stage,
For there they have the art superlative
Of moving hearts, beleaguering them so,
Perforce they yield, and to the captors pay
Tribute incontinent of sighs and tears !

John. Almost I guess the stage had been my forte !

Char. What a tragedian, husband, had you made !

John. I think I had !

Char. Were it a killing part,
No need of dagger, poison'd chalice, cord !
Your looks had slain without them.

John. I believe

The stage has lost a murderer in me !
I won't regret it, though ; come, lady wife,
We now must feast, so let me lead thee home !

Peter. [*Entering.*] One Master Blount inquires for you below,
A dame along with him who seems his wife.

John. [*Aside.*] My father and my mother !—Bid them hie
At noon to-morrow to the place they know
On Ludgate-hill.—I cannot see them here. [*PETER goes out.*]

Char. Who wants to see you, husband ?

John. Nobody.

A friend of such a sort as one may have
And know not—one may lose and never miss.

Peter. [*Re-entering.*] He is angry at your answer—there he stands,
And will not quit the door.

John. Most shocking breeding!
Repeat my answer, sir, I cannot see him,
[*COLONEL BLOUNT bursting in, followed by MASTER and MISTRESS BLOUNT: SIR PHILIP BRILLIANT and LADY ANNE, who joins LADY BLANCHE, entering from another part of the chamber.*

Col. Blount. Where is my brother?—may I call him so,
Who keeps his reverend parents at the door!
What means this, John—how comes it? What! Art thou
My elder brother, and instruct'st me thus?
Endurest thou the roof, that is too proud
To shelter these most loved and sacred heads?
Spurn'st not the threshold, that admits thy feet,
And these most hallow'd ones forbids to pass?
Hold'st commerce with the host, that takes thee in,
And those thou ow'st thy being to shuts out?
For surely host, roof, threshold, are to blame;
For sacrilege 'gainst nature like to this,
And not the man with whom I share one blood.

John. There are times, brother, and occasions.

Col. Blount. None
For doing that which damns the precious soul;
And Heaven hath set our parents next itself
For piety, whose slight entaileth death!
Passing along with these most noble friends,
I saw our sire and mother at the door;
Paid them my duty; found they had traced thee hither,
Succeeding on the search that baffled me;
Learn'd the proud message thou hadst sent them down;
And gave't reception, as became their son!
Up to them, brother! no excuses make
For what admits of none; but own thy fault,
And ask for pardon.

Mis. Blount. Husband, tell me now,
Is not a mother far the likeliest
To know her own son? Where is now thy John?
But look upon my Thomas! Gentleman
Or tradesman, he is the same!—would own thee, though
Thou still hadst apron on!—would smile at me,
Call'd I him now "Good Thomas!—Honest lad!—
Kind boy!" as, when he was thy 'prentice, John
I used to do; and he was fond to hear,
And now, I will be bound, would like as well!

Col. Blount. O mother, there are strains in boyhood heard,
As men that thrill us, as none other can!
But come, forgive my brother.

Lady A. [*Coming forward.*] Blanche, a thought
Has struck me. Show thyself. Let him behold
The yeoman's maid again.—He is riveted!

Col. Blount. She is found.

Lady A. [*Aside.*] My guess was right!

Col. Blount. It must be she!

The simple silent maid, in humble guise,
Whose beauty unpretending, without aid,
Made captive of me!—whom, although I left,
I follow'd still—from whom that gap, they say
Oblivion oft fills up—fatal to love—
Absence—could ne'er divide me, but became
A bed in which the stream of memory ran,
And gather'd flood in flowing.—Art not she?
O turn to me!—O let me see thy face,
The radiant impress of consummate woman,
Superlative from Nature's hand alone,
Who, jealous of her master-work, refused
Prosperity and rank a share in thee,
And made thee daughter, rare, of lowliness!
Will you not turn?

Lady Bl. Yes, will you guarantee
All risk, thereby, I run.

Col. Blount. I do!

Lady Bl. Behold!

Col. Blount. The yeoman's maid! were empress of the
earth,
Did rank by beauty go!

Lady Bl. Know'st thou me not?

Col. Blount. Know I thee not? Ay, by these eyes that see
thee,

These ears that hear thee; and, beyond e'en these,
The heart that feasts on what they see and hear.

Lady Bl. Thou know'st me not?

Col. Blount. Art not the yeoman's maid?

Lady Bl. I am, but was not she.—She was a sprite,
My wayward fancy for illusion raised,
Now marvellously turn'd to flesh and blood,
Through talisman of thy most noble worth!
None see you here beside the yeoman's maid?

Col. Blount. None.

Lady Bl. Let me doff the hood I still kept on,
How say you now, sir?

Col. Blount. Nothing do I see,
Except the yeoman's maid. I see the hood
Still in your modest coif and simple cloak.

Lady Bl. There then.

Col. Blount. The Countess.

Lady Bl. No.—The yeoman's maid.
Spare what I was for what I have become;
If what I have become content thee, take me!
Or take me not, none other e'er shall own me!
Now do I see how wealth and rank themselves,
Estranging Nature from simplicity,
May root her graces up, and in their stead

Plant blemishes ;—but I have wider swerved,
Misled by vanity and pride of sway,
Never suspecting that to hold one heart,
Outwent the boast of winning thousand ones—
A lesson taught by you, and learn'd for life!

Col. Blount. How will the mood the selfsame features
change!

E'en as the air will change the selfsame cheek!
Now, I behold again the maid I loved,
Still love—had loved, for ever, though unfound.
Take thee? I do!—In all humility,
And thankfulness and love, I take thee, lady!

Charlotte. [*Advancing with her party.*] My mistress.

[*To ROBERT.*]

Rob. Yes; and there's my master! Come!
Let's steal away. Come! Stephen! Jacob!

Steph. and Jacob. Well?

Rob. To keep our titles, best we take them hence!

John. Nay, noble friends, tarry awhile, I pray.

My father, mother, and my brother, there,
And those good friends, I question not, will join
My feast in honour of our nuptials with
The Countess Lady Blanche.

Char. [*Running up to JOHN, and placing her hand before his mouth.*] Stop, Colonel Blount.

Col. Blount. I answer to that name.

Char. No, sir! I mean

This gentleman.

Col. Blount. Brother! How were you made

A colonel?

John. How was I made a colonel?—by

Rapid promotion.

Sir Phil. Robert, this is you!

Rob. I own 'twas I that dubb'd him colonel, sir,
But with his own good-will.

John. Wife, how is this?

Char. Dear husband, pardon me,
I am not the Countess, but her lady's-maid.

John. I'll be divorced.

Char. You must be married first.

You have been cheated, sir, but innocently,

At cost alone of your credulity.

Our wedding and our titles, were the same,—

A play to make you wise and pass the hour!

Col. Blount. John, take it in good part.

John. I will do so,

Brother, I am a man to bear a jest.

If there is one thing I am master in

Beyond another, brother, it is that.

Lady Bl. Anne!

Lady A. Blanche?

Lady Bl. A man is something after all!

[*Coming down.*]

Lady A. Yes, with our help—I made one of Sir Philip.

Lady Bl. Nay, Anne, my eyes are open'd. We require Men's help as well—except for Colonel Blount I ne'er had been a woman. Much I question If you, yourself, are past improving by them.

Lady A. O Blanche!

Lady Bl. O Anne! the older, still the wiser! And won't I titter when you say "obey" Before the parson! Will you say it?

Lady A. Yes.

Lady Bl. And "love" and "honour" too?

Lady A. I will!—Won't you?

Lady Bl. Devoutly, Anne, as e'er I said my prayers. But, Anne, the pass we're come to! Don't you know? How shall we answer to old maids for this?

Lady A. Lay heads together, and concoct a speech. Proceed you.

Lady Bl. Nay, I never open'd school, On which account take you precedence, Anne. I'll help you to the first word—"Ladies!"—well?

Lady A. Ladies—I'll lay the fault upon the men.

[To BLANCHE.]

Lady Bl. [Aside.] They lay the fault first who are most to blame.

Lady A. But for the men we had been still old maids. Accept of our regrets.

Lady Bl. Nay, Anne, tell truth—
We don't regret at all! Let me go on,
I'll make a grace of our defection, Anne.—
Ladies, applaud us martyrs in the cause,
For which, contending with more zeal than heed,
We were ta'en captive by the common foe.
Profit by our example, don't despise
An enemy, though slight; and, if you fail
As we have done, endure it with good grace;
Believe you put on wreaths, in wedlock's chains,
And turn, with loving faith, to flowers the links,
Of which the strongest beggars liberty.

END OF OLD MAIDS.

THE ROSE OF ARRAGON:

A Play,

IN FIVE ACTS.

TO NEALE THOMSON, ESQ.,

OF CAMPHILL, GLASGOW.

MY DEAR NEALE THOMSON,

Accept this humble, but sincere Testimony of
Affection and Gratitude, from your faithful Friend and
Servant,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

29, ALFRED PLACE, BEDFORD SQUARE,
LONDON, 30th May, 1842.

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT THE HAYMARKET IN 1842.)

<i>The King of Arragon</i>	Mr. HOWE.
<i>Alonzo</i> , his Son, married to <i>Olivia</i>	Mr. H. HOLL.
<i>Andreas</i> }	Mr. WILSONE.
<i>Carlos</i> }	Mr. WORRELL.
<i>Gomez</i> }	Mr. WILLIAMS.
<i>Pedro</i> , an Executioner	Mr. GOUGH.
<i>Ruphino</i> , a Peasant.....	Mr. STUART.
<i>Alasco</i> , his Son.....	Mr. C. KEAN.
<i>Almagro</i> }	Alasco's friend, in love
with <i>Olivia</i>	Mr. PHELPS.
<i>Velasquez</i>	Mr. F. VINING.
<i>Cortez</i>	Mr. CAULFIELD.
<i>Nunez</i>	Mr. T. F. MATTHEWS.
<i>Olivia</i> , <i>Ruphino's</i> Daughter	Mrs. C. KEAN.
<i>Theresa</i> , an Attendant.	

Officers, Jailer, Peasants, Guards, &c.

THE ROSE OF ARRAGON.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the Citadel.*

Enter CARLOS and ANDREAS.

And. The Prince not yet set out !

Car. Not yet. He cleaves

To home with doting on his peasant wife.

His journey towards the frontier, thrice, has he,

From day to day, deferr'd, already ; but

The King, impatient of his weak delay,

Brooks it no longer. He departs at noon.

And. Guess you, my lord, the motive of the King

In banishing, as 'twere, at such a time,

The Prince from Saragossa ? Hard exchange,

The bridal chamber for the warrior's tent !

The murmurs and the dalliance of love,

For the trump's braying and the clang of steel !

Methinks, the nuptials, he so interrupts,

Can scarce be to his mind !

Car. 'Tis certain, sir,

They are not, and no wonder. The fair Prince

Had bent full low, to choose, for mate, a bride

Of pure Hidalgo blood ; how then, the child

Of a peasant—grant her pattern of her sex,

And never match'd throughout the lengthy line

Of Eve's angelic daughters ?

And. Such she is !

A noteless maid, that from all note, how'er

Surpassing, so diverts observance, that

Her perfect beauty and consorting form

Bewilder rivalry itself, and turn

The infidel into a worshipper !

Car. Certain she has no peer ; yet, not a match

For the King's son. So thinks the King ; and, hence,

The Prince hath honourable banishment.

The army needs no prince, the soldier who

Commands it, prince of leaders !—Do you think

The King stops here ? Will he remain content

With banishment of the enamour'd Prince ?

Will that remove the *cause* of banishment ?

The knot the Prince has tied, will that undo it ?
 'Tis but the opening of a drama, sir,
 Of which the master-action is to come !

And. I trust the King, if more he meditates,
 Will act advisedly—Our peasant princess,
 Amongst her class, ranks highest ; royal pastures,
 For their extent and stock, her father hath,—
 Is more beloved than envied ; hath a son
 Of parts that look with scorn upon his station,
 And fiery soul, more prompt to move than rest !
 The peasantry speak things that mock content—
 Complain of wasting levies, grievous imposts—
 And with their thoughts our citizens chime in.
 The Cortez have been calmer too.—Behoves
 The King be wary how he acts !—A straw
 Has struck the sceptre from as firm a grasp,
 And may do so with his.—The King is here,
 And, lo, the peasant princess, following,
 But borne along, with senses wholly lapsed.
 The parting must be o'er ; the Prince, set out.

The KING enters.

King. [*Speaking to persons without.*] Convey her to her
 chamber !—Tend to her !

Advise us, soon as to herself she comes. [*Sees ANDREAS.*
 Andreas return'd ! Despatch, indeed, my lord !
 How go the levies on ?

And. But tardily,
 I grieve to say ; your people lack the heart
 To tender duty quickly.

King. Needs the spur !
 We know to use it ! Carlos, take in charge
 The task, whereof we lately gave you hint,
 Soon as her lapsed senses are restored.
 Stay !—Andreas.

And. My liege ?

King. To invest our will
 With greater weight, share you the charge with Carlos,
 To rid my palace of its forced guest.
 The countenance I lent this loathed marriage,
 Won from my weakness by my wilful son,
 I now retract—irrevocably annul.
 The contract which, at first, we set our seal to,
 Enforced from us, is render'd valid by
 No after grace. Consent, enforced, is none !
 Soon as her senses from their lapse spring up,
 Declare to her, our mandate, she depart
 From Saragossa ; nor return to it,
 On penalty of death ! Apparel, gems,
 All gifts of lavish, ill-advised love
 Are hers to keep ; nor let her lack for gold.

Meanwhile, my council summon. Kings must give
 Their actions other sanction than their own!
 A peasant share the throne of Arragon?
 Far better Arragon without a throne! [*They go out severally*]

SCENE II.—*A Cottage. In the distance a mountainous country.*

Enter RUPHINO and ALASCO.

Ruph. How sayest now, Alasco? Art content?
 Thy overbearing pride is conqueror!
 His private nuptials with thy sister hath
 The Prince Alonzo own'd, in presence of
 His royal father, and convention full
 Of all the noble blood in Arragon;
 And thou, the peasant-heir unto a stool,
 By proclamation under royal seal—
 For 'tis the same as such, as clear implied—
 Art kinsman to a race whose seats are thrones!
 Art now content?

Alas. I am.

Ruph. So am not I.

It was coercing, where the will was free
 To do all needful right, and such had done!
 By the rare beauty of your sister won.
 And more by her rare virtue, which repell'd
 The approach of love, till honour came with it,
 Its most ingenuous voucher that 'twas such
 As chariest virgin, free, might entertain;
 The Prince at once besought her heart and hand,
 Assured by holy rite.

Alas. The Prince was wise.

He knew a virtuous woman, and the way
 She could alone be won; and took that way;
 Thereby receiving to his arms a maid
 Whose worth is challenger of Arragon
 To find another maid her moiety!
 Good sooth, I thank the Prince, for honestly
 Affecting my rare sister!—taking care
 Of his health! By Our Lady, had he breathed to her,
 That's pure as Heaven, one wish or thought of hell,
 And with my cognizance—

Ruph. Alasco, peace!

Supposing wrongs to be by those committed
 Who never gave us ground to think they meant them,
 But proofs, instead, of holiest intents;
 Is to commit, ourselves, a grievous wrong,
 And surfeit virtue of its bootless deeds,
 That cannot earn it credit! So oft-times
 Uncharitableness defaulters makes

Of those who, else, were solvent. Think, my son,
If this were told the Prince, how it might change
His aspect towards thy sister; without cloud
And summer brightness now!

Alas. If it were told?

'Tis told!

Ruph. By whom?

Alas. By me!—nor stintingly.

Think you I went a-begging when I went
To claim admission of my sister's rights,
As loud and broad as though she had a king
To father her, being a prince's wife?

Ruph. I was content to know she was his wife—
Her honour so assured, it needed not
Be bruited through the realm—disparaging—
To his rank!

Alas. [*greatly indignant*]. Disparaging!

Ruph. Well, boy, how now?

Alas. [*Recollecting himself.*] You are her father, and you
have a right

To speak of your own child.

Ruph. I hope I have.

Alas. Disparaging!—The Prince beheld her first
At a tournament, among the common gazers,
No state to point her out, and yet the mark
Attracted every eye!—he heard the buzz
Of wonder, heralding her matchless beauty,
And, far and near, the concourse summoning
Before the humble seat allotted her!
With but her peasant brother, for a page;
With but a peasant's fillet, for a crown;
With robes, no other than a peasant's tire;
There sat my sister, on that common bench,
Converting it into a radiant throne,
Before which ribbons, stars, and coronets
Press'd, thick, to stand and render homage to her—
Disparaging!

Ruph. I meant to his rank!

Alas. His rank?

Rank's but an eminence whereon we see
Sometimes a tower, sometimes a hovel—makes,
Alike conspicuous, the dignity
Or meanness of the thing that's built upon it!

Ruph. My son, these thoughts—

Alas. Nay, father, hear me on!

I honour rank, when he, who owns, becomes it!
For, here, our stations differ from our clothes—
That these are to our measure made; those not—
Whence marvellous misfitting! Tell me not
Of the Prince's rank, but tell me of his deeds;
Of which I know but little, save that once
He used a peasant's daughter honestly—

That, of its grace diminish'd, when the thing
He felt no shame to do, he fear'd to own!
A private marriage not to be divulged
Till he saw time!—I saw that time was now,
And made him see it, too!

Ruph. 'Twas breach of faith!

Alas. No, father!—what I was no party to,
I no observance owed. My sister's marriage
Did accident, alone, reveal to me.

I found that *she* had won the Prince's love
Who well deserved a prince—he thought she did,
And married her!—If good enough, to wed;
I thought my sister good enough, to own—
And told him so. What instances I used,
And what dissuasion he, it matters not;
The Prince has own'd her, and I am content;
Though I had wish'd her otherwise bestow'd!

Ruph. What! on Almagro? Must I tell thee, son,
The thousandth time, I do not like that man;
Whose God is not the one he prayeth to,
But the worst idol that a man can serve—
Self!—Find the friend he does not profit by,
In pride, or vanity, or avarice,
And I will grant him single in his loves!
Find me the friend he would not sacrifice,
When profit kept not pace with cherishing;
And I will show you him who made Almagro,
Help'd him with brain and heart, and when in need,
Was left there, for a doitt.

Alas. Velasquez?

Ruph. Yes!

Alas. Velasquez dotes!

Ruph. He dotes who loves Almagro!
Thou, boy! perceiv'st not he is arrogant?
Whom does he not o'erbear that is too weak,
From gentleness or place, to throw him off?
Of all pernicious things, the very worst
Is large ambition with a narrow soul.
Because it strives for power which, when obtain'd,
'Tis certain to abuse.

Alas. He is generous!

Ruph. And you aye hear of it. Boy, there are men
Who coin by charities, and he is one!
Say what he gives, I'll tell you what he gets
By what he gives; which makes his bounties mites—
His modest bounties, that would shun the light.
They still make sure to meet! He is ungrateful!
And he that is ungrateful, can't be generous!

Alas. He is my friend!—I love him! he loves me!

Ruph. Not thee he loves, boy, but thy properties,
That much avail him in the game he plays
To raise himself to popularity.

For, through thy reverend uncle's loving care,
 Thy mind, in youth, was plough'd by diligence,
 And with the seeds of knowledge amply sown,
 That found a kindly soil! Wherein he lacks,
 Thou makest up to him with such a zeal,
 Privation makes him rich!—his little worth—
 For he has worth, as every man hath some—
 Thy magnifying love heaves up for him
 Into a mountain!—make it pass for such—
 That, with the crowd, he grows enormously!
 But he hath vanity voracious as
 The hunger that's disease—which, though 'tis gorged
 Full to the throat, cannot stop craving on!
 Wait till thou stint'st him *there!* He'll fail thee—*ycay!*
 Though he could save thee from a jail or starving!
 Besides, he has the temper of a wolf.
 He has been known to use a woman roughly!
 Hurt her to vent his choler! Such a man
 To get thy sister's hand!

Alas. It were bestow'd
 Better than on the Prince;—disparity
 Of rank, in those that wed, is dangerous.
 In such relation there should be no debts,
 Save those that are reciprocal, and which
 Jars cannot call to mind!—Will the great Prince
 Forget the peasant in the Prince's wife?
 Will life be all one honeymoon? Believe
 The temper is the sweetest—pain will turn it.
 And that is of the body, or the mind;
 And sometimes is so sharp, it won't abide
 A comforter, but flout the care would lull it!
 So, for love's pains, gives love, itself, repulse;
 So, is its dulcet tongue harsh accents taught,
 The least of which breaks its entrancing spell,
 And wakens moods, to love, as clouds to sun!
 Ah then the heart of woman, when she finds
 The force her modest nature underwent
 To make allow'd surrender of her charms,
 Forgotten! for the host of suing wishes
 That won her slow consent, repugnance now,
 Rebuke, reproach!—her lack of wealth or state
 Cast into her teeth by him, who swore to her
 A month ago her value beggar'd kingdoms!
 So should it fare with my dear sister, gods!
 How she would blanch and freeze to find a churl
 In him she loved so dear, she quitted brother—
 And father for him! I have had my humours,
 Which her content has paid for, for a moment;
 And when she has reproach'd me, lovingly,
 And found it only chafed me, she has wept—
 But the first tear has thrown me on her neck.
 Would it be so with him?

Ruph. 'Twould not be so
With him thou lov'st,—Almagro.

Alas. No, by my troth,
Because it could not be—Almagro is
Her equal. But behoves the Prince beware
He sports not with her tears, or drops may fall,
Lie nearer to the heart, from those he cherishes!
Let him beware! If there are towns and cities
In Arragon, so are there villages,
Which men inhabit, by the fresh breath of heaven
Nurtured, more hardily, than those who live
In streets and lanes, like convicts pent in mines,
Wasted with sweltering! Her first complaint
Would raise a cry for vengeance that would shake
His father from his throne!

Ruph. Beware, my son;
The man who ever runs into extremes,
Nine times in ten o'erlooks both right and reason,
That, mostly, lie between. This is again
Almagro, who would make thee common foe;
While, for himself, the greatest foe thou hast,
He nourishes the friend. Boy!—Boy!—that man
Will bring thee into straits! For his own ends
He heaps up discontents 'gainst all above him,
To crush them with the weight—not for the hatred
He bears oppression, but for envy of it!
He blames the grievance he himself inflicts not;
But let him have the power, you will see worse
Begot of his own pride and heartlessness!
I say no more, my son!—Beware of him!
Where loiter'd you upon your journey home?
Six weeks you have been gone; ere one was past,
Your sister was proclaim'd the Prince's wife.

Alas. I took a circuit home to see my friends,
And tell what I had done.

Ruph. You're a great man
In Arragon!

Alas. I number many friends!
No word yet from my sister?

Ruph. I expect
Word by Velasquez—Who is he comes yonder?
I see but dimly!—I am very old—
Is it Velasquez?

Alas. Yes, Velasquez 'tis,
And looks like one who has a tale to tell.—

[VELASQUEZ enters hastily—stops short on seeing

ALASCO.

How now, Velasquez?

Velas. Are you there, Alasco?

Alas. Yes, I am here—the matter?

Velas. Nothing!

Alas. Something!

Your steps were hasty,—did you speed for nothing?
 Your breath is scanty,—was it spent for nothing?
 Your looks imply concern,—concern for nothing?
 Your road lay to my father,—seeing me,
 You stopp'd as bound to any other door!
 Was that for nothing?—Ay—and now you stand
 Like one that's balk'd about to take a leap
 Which he felt sure to make—with bated crest,
 With vigour chill'd, wann'd cheek, and sparkless eye!—
 Do all these things mean nothing?—if they do,
 Then means commotion nothing!

Velas. I would be
 Alone with your father.

Alas. So I told you!—Well,
 You are alone with him.

[*Goes out.*]

Ruph. What is't, Velasquez?
 Thou comest from the capital, and thence,
 Or I mistake, thou bringest news for me.

Velas. I do; and therefore wish'd thy son away;
 For he is rash; and, gall'd, will take no road,
 Save that his fury likes.

Ruph. Bring'st thou me news
 Would rouse the fury of my son, Velasquez?
 Thou mak'st me tremble—I am very old;
 Too old to hear bad news!—Don't tell it yet—
 Yet know I what it is.—Alas! my daughter!
 I knew no good could come of this avowal!
 The Prince has used her ill!—and if he has,
 Let him look to it!—Let him!—Threescore years and ten,
 'Gainst youth are but a straw against a staff;
 But, with no better, will I heard the man
 That wrongs my daughter!—I grow strong, Velasquez;
 Am waxing young again, as in my prime!
 Ay, as I live, I am!—I thank thee, Nature!
 To have left me strength!—I yet am worth a blow!—[*Stagger.*]
 I reel, Velasquez,—let me lean upon thee.

Velas. The Prince has done no wrong.

Ruph. Heav'n bless the Prince!
 And pardon me that I did wrong to him
 In thinking that he had!—the gracious Prince,
 That ever honourably loved my child!
 How could I think that he could do her wrong!
 Don't say I did so.—What's amiss, Velasquez?
 I see 'tis nothing that affects my child:
 Nought can go wrong, while the good Prince is near her.

Velas. He is no longer near her.

Ruph. No!—Not near her?
 My dark surmises are at work again!
 And yet thou say'st he has not wrong'd my child.

Velas. Thy child and he are wrong'd.

Ruph. We'll right them, then
 Who did it?—well?

Velas. The King!

Ruph. How?—How?

Velas. Despatch'd

The Prince to head his armies in the north,
And, when his back was turn'd, convoked his council,
And made them pass a formal act, declaring
The marriage of thy daughter null and void!

Ruph. His right to his throne is void, if he breaks through
Religion and the laws that fence my child!

There are men in Arragon!—Alasco!—I

Have found my strength again! Alasco!—Ay,

I am a peasant, he is a king! Great odds!

But greater have grown even!—Why, Alasco!

Enter ALASCO.

Alas. Here, father.

Ruph. [*recollecting himself at sight of his son*]. O—I call'd
you,—did I?

Alas. Yes.

Ruph. I did it without thinking—Well, Alasco?

Alas. Well, father?

You call'd me, and I know you wanted me.

Speak out, and do not fear my rashness, father:

Though there be cause for heat, I can be cool.

How pale you are! How you are quivering,

And how you gasp for breath! and your eyes look

As, would you let them, they could drown your cheeks!

Oh, my poor father!

Ruph. Your poor sister, boy!—

[*Bursts into tears and falls on ALASCO's neck.*]

Alas. What of my sister?—Say, Velasquez, for

My father can't, or won't.

Enter ALMAGRO, and a number of other Peasants.

Alma. Alasco—News!

Alas. Ay, now I'll hear it.

Ruph. Tell it you, Velasquez!

Let it not come from him! He will heap fire

On fire.

Velas. Your sister is divorced, Alasco,

By edict of the men who guard the laws.

Alma. Who break the laws!—Yes, the fair Prince Alonzo,—

Royal Alonzo!—weary of his wife—

Though but the waning of the honeymoon,

Only the waning—he were made of ice

Could think it more—on pretext of command

From the King to lead his armies—'Twas contrived—

A piece of villany at the first sight:—left her,

To cast her honourably from his bed!

Ruph. Thou liest.

Alma. [*furiously*]. Liest!

Alas. Peace! Almagro!—Nay,

Scowl not upon my father! If you are angry,
Brow me!

Alma. My dear Alasco!

Ruph. Dear!—how long?

The Prince did never yet a double deed!
I would that I could say as much for thee!

Alma. For me! [*Furiously.*]

Alas. Again? May not an old man say
What he likes?

Ruph. I would all young men spoke as true!

Alas. Father! your child is shamed! that horrid word
Written on her brow, thou'dst wish her dead ere read there;
Her!—me!—thyself!—all kith and kin thou hast!
And can thy breast find room for other cause
Of hate, reviling, or revenge? If it can,
Mine can't.

Alma. No more can mine. I have no foes
Save those who wrong thy sister!—none will have!
Give me thy hand, Velasquez, and be friends.

Velas. I could be friends with him bespoke me foul!
I could be friends with him that gave me blow;
But with the friend who fail'd me in the need
He should, and could have help'd; I'll ne'er be friends.

Alma. By hell! Velasquez—[*Furiously.*]

Alas. Do you rage again?
Or did I dream you do? Friends! if not friends
Among yourselves, waive jars awhile for me!
Who is a caitiff, be it not the man
Laws civil and religious cannot bind?
Or what are prayers, if holy rites are threads,
And those they bind, asunder cut, at will?
Or what is Heaven, if of no more esteem
Than what 'tis witness to, to be pronounced
A fraud and nullity? 'Tis sacrilege
If from the altar one abstract a mite,
And the offender dies; yet, by my troth,
It may be want that did the deed, not he,
And hunger breaks, they say, through walls of stone!
But what prompts *him* who mocks the altar, friends?
Pays to the compact 'tis appliance to
No grain of the respect he entertains
For bargains struck by hands 'cross market tables?
What, if not hell?—What should be done to such,
Ay, say he wore a crown?

Alma. He should be stripp'd on't,—
Caged in a mine—yea, mulcted to the cost
Of his life!

Ruph. O no—no—no! He should be made
To render back their rights to those from whom
He wrested them—no more. That's justice, sir;
The rest is vengeance, which belongs to Heaven,
Not sinful things like men!

Alas! We'll master him,
Then deal with him.

Ruph. My son, you will not then
Be masters of yourselves!

Alas. No fear of us!
Come!—To the villages! and every man
Call out his friends, and bring them where we'll meet
In one o'erwhelming mass!

Peasants. Where?

Alas. Let's consult!

[Retires a little with ALMAGRO and the rest.

Ruph. Back—back, Velasquez, as thou lovest me!
Back to the capital! find out my child!—
Apprise her of what's coming! She may need
To be upon her guard. I'll do as much
For thee. Meanwhile, I'll get me ready, friend,
And follow thee with all the speed I can.

[VELASQUEZ goes out.

Oh, how I shake!—Storms do not for old trees—
Time was I thought them puffs. I then was young!

Alas. and Alma. At the Cross!

[The rest echo them, exclaiming, "At the Cross!"

Alma. Now for redress of common grievances—
Burdens should not be borne—We'll cast them off!

Peasants. We will!

Alma. One signal wrong does better than
Tocsins, my friends, to call bold men to arms!

Peasants. To arms!

Ruph. Hear me, my boy!—Alasco! O, my son!—

Alas. I am thy son, and for that very reason
I will not hear thee, while my sister suffers
An injury and a shame.—To arms! to arms!

[All except RUPHINO rush out, crying, "To arms!
to arms!" RUPHINO totters into the Cottage.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—In the Citadel.

Enter the KING and ANDREAS.

King. What! not the jewels that he gave her?

And. No;

Though o'er and o'er assured, in taking them,
She did your highness' will. Her wedding-ring
Was all she kept.

King. No murmurs? No complaints?

And. None; but, instead, prayers for your highness' health,
And length of prosperous life!

King. She would be thought

A martyr! She has heard how such have suffer'd,

Blessing their persecutors; and pretends

To imitate them! 'Tis the way to make

Misfortunes profit us—especially

With the mean—to whom the pang still brings the wail,

It moves their wonder, and they worship that

They wonder at! I warrant you she won,

With patient aspect, and undrooping mien,

More hearts to pity her, as she went forth,

Than tears and wringing of the hands had done!

And. She went not forth by the chief portal, but

A private one, and thereby shunn'd the crowd,

That fill'd the street with ferment.

King. By your care,

Or by her own?

And. Her own, my gracious liege.

King. 'Twas much forbearance; but the girl is shrewd;

She knows unlikely things may come to pass;

The hardest heart may melt; my mind may change

To bind more fast, what now I have unbound;

Whereto she takes good heed no hindrance come,

Through lack of patience, now! She is very wise!

Her beauty, past compare, must all allow.

Can she be blind to what all others see?

And can she see it, without prizing it?

The homeliest maid, I ever met with, thought

More of herself than she would seem to do.

She is very wise!—Aught said she of the Prince?

And. No, not a word; but paused before she went,

Gazing upon his portrait strainingly.

I think, but am not sure, at first she wept,

For past her eyes her kerchief once she drew;

'Twas then put up, and, to her other hand,

The hand that held it, join'd in fervent clasp;

And thus she stood, the spirit, as I thought,

Of very prayer, itself, personified;

For o'er her face the cast which masters give,

To paint the act of beatific trance,

Spread, flooding it with light! whate'er she thought,

The words were in her heart.—She breathed no sound

Till she had made an end; as I inferr'd

From a deep sigh she drew; whereon she turn'd

With aspect heavenly calm, as worshippers,

That rise refresh'd, from the renewing altar.

King. You speak this heartily!

And. I speak the truth!

King. You say the Cortez, in last night's debate,

Made question of my faculty to break

This most pernicious marriage?

And. Many spoke
To that effect,—made it a pretext for
Rehearsal of old grievances.

King. What *they*
Call grievances!—Was there much heat?

And. There was:
But that within doors, cool to that without,
Where up and down the streets the people ran,
Women and men, but women frequentest,
Crying to one another, as they pass'd,

"The Rose of Arragon!"—"Fall Arragon
Ere she be trampled on!"—"No Rose, no King!"

King. Suspect you danger?

And. Yes, when discontents
Draw women out of doors, revolt is strong.

King. The garrison is under arms?

And. It is,
And, every quarter of an hour, patrols
Are sent into the town, to go the rounds,
And keep in check disorder, by the show
Of preparation and alacrity!

King. You have not yet gone forth?

And. Not yet, my liege;
I wait for Carlos, to report the state
And prospect of affairs. It is his hour—
And he at hand as soon.

King. Well, Carlos?

Enter CARLOS.

Car. All

Was quiet through the night; and, as the night,
I would aver the day were like to pass,
But for unwonted calm. An hour, or more,
'Tis past the time the shopkeeper should ope—
And he is up, but bides with shutters closed;
The craft of the artificer stands still,
And yet he is awake since break of day—
The cries are silent on the crowdless streets;
The very churls, whose meals on errands wait,
Stand not upon the watch for customers,
And breakfast-time at hand! 'Tis market-day—
And to the gates no troops of peasants come,
With garden-viands, flocks, or herds, or ought
Within the list of rustic merchandise.
None is at work, save the tired sentinel
Who paces, out and back, his beat; on watch
'Gainst dangers yet unseen.

King. It cannot be!

Car. What cannot be, my liege?

King. That they design
Revolt!

And. There's eight o'clock.

King. Hark, sirs!—The town
Is all at once astir! What is't?—Look out!

Car. Their houses, one and all the citizens
Have left, and throng the streets;—their cloaks are on,
Close-folded on their breasts; they move one way,
As on one common object bent!

King. Descend:

Wait till your eye on some acquaintance falls,
Then call and question him. Go both of you—

[*Exeunt CARLOS and ANDREAS.*]

What is't to be a king?—To govern?—Ay!
With such observance as the pilot meets,
Who thinks to rule the sea! not more perverse,
Than moody ever-changing subjects are!
Rejoicing in his helm, *he* ploughs along!
Leagues fleet like miles beneath his flying keel!
Before its time his port begins to loom!
When takes him, right ahead, all unawares,
A furious shift of wind; which, if he 'scapes
From foundering, blows him, from his jocund course
A thousand miles away!—So with a king!
A month ago the war was popular;
My people's wishes with my army blew,
Which from the gates of Saragossa march'd
'Mid shouts that would have made their cannon mute,
Suppose 'twere set to roar.—I was a god!
Knees bent to me as I retraced my steps,
Returning to my palace! All at once
The humour changed. From end to end the realm
Became one caldron, ready to boil o'er
With discontents! A little more of heat
Was wanted only—that is now supplied!
The meanest sire in Arragon, suppose
His son, like mine, offended, would be free
To cast his bride and him to beggary!
But I must needs forbear, because—a king!—

Enter CARLOS.

Your tidings, Carlos?

Car. In our power we hold
The cause, if not the head of the revolt,
That boldly now breaks forth!—Within the gates,
Acting in concert, as 'tis shrewdly guess'd,
With the malcontents,—the Rose of Arragon,
Attended by a peasant, new alighted,
With steed, nigh spent, as through unwonted haste—
Has been surprised, made captive of, and now
Attends with those who guard her.

King. Did we straight
Decree her death, who could arraign our justice?
On pain of death, did we forbid return;
On her account defection menaces

Our throne, our life ; and she, the cause, defies
Our warning and our wrath ! To durance with her !

Olivia [*without*]. The King ! the King ! As you are loyal
men,

Bring me before him !

King. Is't to me she comes ?

Let her approach.

Olivia. I must and will pass in !

[*Rushes in and sinks exhausted before the KING,*

VELASQUEZ following.

Forgive, my liege, the limbs that can't command
The homage they have all the heart to pay ;
And helpless throw themselves along the ground,
Instead of kneeling there.

King. How happens this ?

Girl, I could rail, but thy pale cheek disarms me !
What ! art thou scared to see the conflagration
Which thou, thyself, hast raised ? Or hast return'd
To Saragossa, whence I banish'd thee,
To fan the discontent that takes thy part ;
And, now thou art detected, makest pretence
On my account thou art here ?

Olivia. I could not play,
My liege, a double part ! I know not how !
On your account alone I brave your frown ;
Which, though it held the lightning's power to blast,
Should not prevent me, for thy health and life,
To crawl to thee ! to clasp thy knees ! and, with
A heart as full of love as loyalty,
To warn thee of thy danger !

King. Loyalty !
And love !—What love ?

Olivia. O can you not conceive
Love may be cherish'd, for another's sake,
Towards those who pay us back no grain of love—
Nay, pay us hate instead ?—'Tis true, my liege !
Indeed, indeed ! 'tis true !—My heart's dear lord
You have taken from me !—'Cross the contract which
Gave him to me, drawn pen !—torn off the seal !—
Stripp'd me to the skin, as 'twere, and cast me forth !—
Yet, could my life this moment stead you,—stand
In the place of yours, and yours were forfeited,
Assuring yours to you—so tender is
The love I bear you, for my dear lord's sake,—
I would not look at it, ere I would lay it down !

King. What wouldst thou gain by such a sacrifice ?

Olivia. Content of mine own heart !—and having that,
I would bless Heaven and die.

King. This is romance,
Whose forms are of the brain !—but, look for them ;
In act, you find them not ; no more than shadows
Which mock the hand, would grasp them.

Olivia. Take a proof!

King. Ay, canst thou give me one?

Olivia. I come not back

Rebelligiously to Saragossa, whence

I went with but obedience in my heart.

If you except my love for my dear lord—

I had no thought, save of the arms I had left;

And those, my father's, I was going to.

King. What made thee then return?

Olivia. My fears for thee!

Roused by the danger thou'rt environ'd with.

King. How couldst thou see the thing that was behind thee;
That had not broken forth, till thou wast gone?

Olivia. I speak, my liege, of fears that were before me,

With word of which, this friend prevented me,

Instructed by my father!—Arragon,

As well as Saragossa, is in arms;

Taking advantage of the distant war

Which leaves your kingdom weak.—Not your throne only,

Your life is threaten'd; so, did I return

Against thy will, to warn thee for thy safety,

To urge thee to consult it; which to do,

Flight must embrace this moment!—wouldst thou fly,

To fly along with thee—thy hostage only!—

And wouldst thou not, to die along with thee!

King. What proof have I of this?

Olivia. That I am here!

What! dear my liege, won't you believe me still?

A simple villager had ta'en my word!

Who would be great, when greatness breeds mistrust!

My liege!—My liege!—I am no courtier's child;

My father ne'er had need to hide his heart,

So ne'er had thought to teach me to hide mine;

And though I have heard men speak and think diverse,

The act I never yet could comprehend;

But, when their lips were open'd, listen'd still,

To hear their hearts!—What cause should bring me back

Except your health?—your safety?—Oh, my liege!

Is it the roof whence, banishing my lord,

You banish'd me enough? is it the bed

Whence you divorced me, not content with that?

Is it the face which, when I saw it last,

Transfix'd me with a look that wish'd me dead,

And almost struck me so?—What were the words

Of him who spoke your will to me?—"On pain

"Of death never to see this palace more!"

I see it!—I incur the penalty!

My life is forfeit!—Take it!—Save thy own!

The only end that brought me back again!

King. I must believe her;—yet can I believe

Deeds worthy richest blood, can live without?—

Incredible!—Yet true!—Well, Carlos,—well?—

Enter CARLOS.

Hast met with those, can tell thee what's afoot?

Car. No, my good liege, save by surmises.

King. Well;

And what surmise your friends?

Car. Some outbreak of

The citizens! But we can master them.

King. Yes, we can master Saragossa!—but
There is fear of Arragon.

Enter GOMEZ.

Gomez. The citizens

And troops contend to hold the city gates,
Which now the peasantry beset in throngs,
As on some festal day, but not with looks
Pertaining to a feast.

Olivia. Sirs! if you are men,
Persuade the King to fly—not Saragossa,
But Arragon, on treason is intent!

And, thereunto, moves hither all its power,
With threats pernicious to the life of the King.

Velas. Fly! fly, my liege!

Gomez. The subterranean vault
That, from the castle, leads without the walls,
Wide from the quarter whence this tempest breaks—
That gain'd, you are safe!

And. The soldiery give way!

[*From window.*

King. I will not fly!—Girl, you have told me truth!
Consult your safety,—join your friends,—leave me!

Olivia. I will not quit your side,—I have a brother,
Will hear his sister's voice; friends, that will hear it.
Whate'er betide, my life I link with yours!
Both shall survive, or both one ruin share!

King. Girl, are you flesh and blood?

Olivia. No, but a roek!

Stand back! [*Meeting ALMAGRO, and others entering.*

Alma. The King himself!—This crowns our work,
Our expedition in his death complete.—
Upon him!

Olivia. Hold! he is my prisoner!
And I have guaranteed his life!—Take mine
If you choose, Almagro.—If you don't, spare his,
Or you *shall* take my life.—Well were it said
The Rose of Arragon kept not her word;
When every Spanish woman, who deserves
To bear her father's name, respects her pledge!
These are *my* friends, Almagro, more than yours!
They are my brother's friends yet more than mine!
They have mothers, sisters, loves, or wives, Almagro!
They will respect my bidding for *their* sakes.

Alma. For your sake come I hither.

Olivia. And I thank you.
And, for the good you mean me, will not shame you;
Nor, countrymen and friends, will I shame you,
And leave it to your enemies to say,
While you stood by, I broke a *Spaniard's* word!

Alma. Suffer ye, friends, a woman thus to thwart you?

Olivia. Almagro, who is with you?—who is leader?

Alma. Your brother.

Olivia. Wait his orders, then!

Alma. I do them!

Olivia. No, on my honour!—by his father's honour!—
His own! He seeks but justice from the King,
No drop of the King's blood! He loves his sister,
But yet he is the subject of the King!
He is a patriot—no regicide!

Alma. Friends, do you halt half-way? Why come ye hither?
Why are your swords in their hands? You are standing here?—
There stands the King, and lives!

Cortez and Nunez. He should not live!

Alma. Who seconds me? [*Going to advance.*]

[*OLIVIA throws herself upon the KING.*]

Olivia. Come on, then, if you will;
My word, you hear, is pledged to save the King!
Either respect my pledge, or see me die!
Around the King's life thus do I wind my own;
If not a safeguard, then a sacrifice!

Alas. [*without*]. *Olivia!*

Olivia. Here, *Alasco!*—Speed, my brother!
Here—Here!—He comes! Now to touch the King who
dares?

ALASCO rushes in, followed by others.

Alas. My sister!

Olivia. Ay, my brother!

Alas. How! the King!

[*Uncovering.*]

King. Your sovereign, sir!—Are you a subject, or
A traitor? If a traitor, in his blood
Consummate what you have begun,—whereto
He lends you his own sword!

[*Throws down his sword, scornfully.*]

Sirs, sheathe your blades! With loyal hearts like yours
The King commands, as long as the King lives!
In strife like this—not strife but butchery—
You shall not stain your blades!

Alas. My liege, except

What's shed without, no blood shall flow to-day.
Sheathe your swords, comrades, *Saragossa's* won!
To custody the King will condescend
To render up his person. You, *Velasquez*,
Will in safe wardship see the King bestow'd.
Your heads uncover'd, sirs!—'tis Majesty,

Though it be fallen in fortunes--

[*The KING and others retire, guarded by VELASQUEZ and Peasants—all uncover as he goes off.*]

Come, Olivia,

Sister, you are no offcast now:--Sit there:

[*Takes her to the throne, and places her upon it.*]

You are the Prince's wife. Till he comes back

And owns her such, the King allowing it,

And to our grievances giving full redress,

Who should be Regent, brothers?—who if not

The Rose of Arragon!

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Saragossa.*

Enter RUPHINO and VELASQUEZ.

Ruph. The people meet to-day! Who summon'd them?

Velas. That have I yet to learn. No proclamation,
Notice, affix'd on the accustom'd quarters,
Calls them together; yet from mouth to mouth
The rumour runs, they meet.

Ruph. No whisper who
Convokes them?

Velas. Some say one, and some another;
But still, with one and all, alike conjecture.

Ruph. Knows this Alasco?

Velas. Him I have not seen.

Ruph. Alasco loses ground. He is nobody!

Cortez and Nunez, who were yesterday

Alasco's hinds, to-day are better men,

Rated as the things for which they pass themselves.

We can tell gold, not men! The coin that's spurious

Won't pass with one in twenty!—out of twenty

Take one, you scarcely the proportion leave,

Who, for the sterling man, will take the base!

Opinion lords it! Let but the cheat keep close,

Take heed the wash conceals the brass or lead,

The stamp and colour carry it!—We ring gold;

We do not so with men, but trust report,

Or sight; and hence the coiner swamps the mint!

So where base metal stops, the counterfeit

Of human nature passes!

Velas. Bitter truths!

There is Almagro! nothing is too high

For his o'er-reaching insolence, which his craft

Passes for the aspiring of desert!

Whereto he gathers those around him, whom

Display and luxury corrupt—who leave
 His board high flush'd, to publish, in his praise,
 The flatteries he himself suggests to them.
 This will not yet thy son, Alasco, see,
 Who, in his singleness of nature, hugs
 A foe, the very worst the man can cope with
 Who deals with such a partner as Almagro!
 Take you Alasco, any day in the year,
 He is the same!—no change of bearing waits
 On change of circumstance—his station mounts,
 Not he!—His peasant's dress he still keeps on,
 Though arbiter of the fate of Arragon!
 This balks; and all at fault we find the crowd,
 Who still the flimsy shows of things affect
 More than the things themselves; while, by a course
 Diverse, Almagro gathers hosts of friends!
 Behoves that man be watch'd!

Ruph. Here comes Almagro,
 Cortez and Nunez too!—My heart forebodes
 Some mischief is afoot! You will attend
 This meeting, will you not?

Velas. Be sure I shall.
 The hour draws nigh.

Ruph. I shall attend it too,
 Though somewhat frail to thread the jostling mass.
 Observe, my friend—so deep are they in converse,
 They note us not! They are plotting, my Velasquez!

[They go out.]

Enter ALMAGRO, CORTEZ, and NUNEZ.

Alma. The man who takes the lead in troublous times,
 Would need a certain toughness of the heart,
 To withstand the dint of Pity,—not give way
 At her instances, which ever thwart the course
 Of just severity. Now such a man,
 Methinks, Alasco is not;—a good man!
 A perfect man in the gentler elements
 Wherein our nature's founded; but without
 Those sterner ones, which render action safe,
 To those therein committed.

Cortez. You are right;
 He is too good!

Alma. A man may be too good!
 'Twas fit the King should die! Strong measures suit
 Bold enterprises!—steps that startle men!—
 Deeds that commit the actors thoroughly!—
 Which defy halting; far more, turning back;
 That fear itself takes risk for counsellor,
 And, in the track of doing, bustles on!
 For though one end combineth many minds,
 Yet, of those many, few—perhaps but one—
 Can calculate the means unto that end—

The road to it, which ever is to make;
 Which some like straight, and others roundabout;
 Which some would travel wet, and others dry;
 Which some would take by day, and some by night;
 Which some would trudge, and others roll along!
 Thus, if all go together, one must lead;
 That all go safe, he must know how to lead;
 He must be brains, and heart, and limbs for all!
 I fear Alasco scarce is such a man.

Nunez. 'Tis clear he is not.

Cortez. See what he has done!

Spared the King's life, wherein our grievance lay!

Alma. Wherein our peril lies; not only that
 Our grievance may return with fourfold weight,
 But heavy penalty be undergone
 For the free breath that we have dared to draw!

Cortez. Talk you of penalty?

Alma. Of penalty!

For see our plight:—the power we have unseated
 Is old in stratagem—has stuck at nought
 To keep the upper hand:—is perfected
 In subtlety to undermine the heart,
 And make the conscience crumble till its scruples
 Are swallow'd quick as water is by sand!
 The King's a prisoner!—what then? A cage
 Lets out as well as in!—no fool but knows
 There are more keys than one to every door,
 And, failing keys, picklocks and sledges work!
 And what are guards, but watchers that must be watch'd!
 While those who watch them may be bad as they,
 And need *their* watchers too!—Nought that partakes
 Of flesh and blood is all dependable!
 "Last life, live hope."—Ay, while there runs a spark
 Among the embers!—There's no bondage, then,
 That's end of hope, but death, with which life ends!
 While the King lives, there's hope for tyranny,
 And peradventure, there's despair for us!

Nunez. If he escapes, we are lost.

Alma. Not all of us.

Alasco is not lost, who spared the King!
 Were I a man who saw with other eyes
 Than those of partial love, thus might I say—
 "Well done, Alasco!—how the fair world goes!
 "Honesty has no chance in it!—makes a noose
 "For its own neck, e'en of the selfsame springe
 "That knavery poaches with!"—I'd slay the man
 That call'd Alasco knave!—yet thus a man
 Who loved him not might say—"A day ago
 "Alasco was a traitor like myself,
 "Like you, and every one of us!—his neck
 "Was debtor to the noose!—but mark,—the death
 "Of the King, which he along with us conspired,

"And which proposing only, we have pawn'd
 "Our lives and all to fortune, by a cast
 "To be redeem'd or lost; he makes assurance
 "Of safety, enrich'd by such prosperity,
 "As of his tallest hopes, a month ago
 "Makes pigmies now!—saves the King's life!—Good sooth,
 "Some men see far,—can calculate most shrewdly
 "The course of consequences!—I had studied
 "An hour, or more, methinks, ere I had seen
 "The way to the King's favour was to put
 "His life in jeopardy."—You know I speak
 Not as myself, but as another man!
 I love Alasco, and, with care for him,
 I contemplate his acts with others' eyes—
 Or rather strive to do so—much I fear,
 In their regards, his mercy to the King
 Seems favour to himself.

Nunez. And yet he keeps
 The King in durance!

Alma. True.

Nunez. How thereupon
 Shall he acquit himself to the King?

Alma. How?

Nunez. Yes.

Alma. By laying it to our charge; to which, no doubt,
 He to the King sets down his threaten'd life!—
 Heard'st what one said to me, when that I urged
 Which you urge now—a shrewd, far-sighted man?

Cortez. What did he say?

Alma. "Alasco spares the King,
 "Thereby incensing us, too chafed thereat
 "To brook the further step—setting the King
 "At liberty!"—Do you see?"—"On our account
 "He keeps the King in durance—for himself,
 "He would set him free to-morrow!"—Do you see?
 "He makes his sister Regent,—What is she?
 "The wife of the Prince, the King's son!—Very well!
 "Where is the Prince?—on the frontier with the army
 "Where will he be a month hence, when he learns
 "The state of Saragossa?—At her gates,
 "With other knocks than beggars give for alms
 "Besieging them; which we would treat like beggars!—
 "But worse than thousand foes without the camp,
 "Is one that lurks within it!—He gains entrance!—
 "He sets his father on the throne again,
 "His wife ascended but to render up;—
 "Alasco is the brother of his wife;
 "Alasco, the preserver of the King;
 "Alasco of his treason is assoil'd;
 "His fault transmuted into his desert;
 "His sister, royal consort for his sake;
 "Himself adopted, cherish'd, help'd to climb;

"While we, his instruments, which when he used
 "He cast aside, obtain for our deserts
 "The dungeon, or the galleys, or the scaffold."
 Now do you see?

Cortez. How well you argue it!

Alma. I, my dear friend!—I only tell you what
 Another said—I did not argue so.

How could I, loving good Alasco?—Love
 With all mankind is blindness, more or less!

Cortez. Would we had made you Regent!—

Alma. Had you done so,
 Thus far at least you had been safe—your ends
 Had been my own!

Nunez. And why not Regent now?

Cortez. The law is now the people's will—the people
 To-day assemble—Nunez, you and I
 Repair to the place of meeting, and at once
 Propose Almagro Regent!

Alma. [*Affecting surprise.*] Do the people
 Assemble to-day?

Cortez. They do.

Alma. You much surprise me!
 And wherefore, friends?

Nunez. Sure you forget, to ask!

Alma. Do I?—I must, when you assert I do!

Nunez. Recall, good sir, what yesternight you said—
 "Behoved the people meet more frequently;
 "As none could tell the day, or hour, their voices
 "Might save the liberties of Arragon."

Alma. Something to that effect I now recall.

Cortez. To that effect we lost no time, but set
 Your friends at once to work; who so contrived,
 The people act as of their own accord,
 Nor know the springs that move them.

Alma. Admirable!

A master-stroke, indeed, of policy!

Cortez. Come, Nunez, come! Almagro shall be Regent!

[*Exit* CORTEZ and NUNEZ.]

Alma. Gods, what a giant is the mass, in act!
 In reason, what a child!—I shall be Regent!
 They think Alasco traitor! Honesty,
 Thou know'st thy thanks! Sweat on!—Alasco is honest;
 Means all men fairly, as he means himself;
 Is true to the cause; would fetter his own limbs,
 To give immunity to the meanest man's
 That has embraced it;—yet is he a traitor!
 Why so should all men fare who think they live
 But for the world, and not the world for them.
 I am Alasco's friend!—Yes, on the terms
 I have been a friend to many another man,
 To friend myself!—Apart from that, Alasco
 Is such a man as jars my nature most—

A trusting lover of the common race;
 Looks to another's good before his own;
 Never suspects that men may cheat, betray;
 Much less that they might swear themselves his friends,
 And cut his throat, as I, almost could do,
 But for this cause, had I no other reason,
 That people say, and not his friends alone,
 I have fatten'd on his credit!—for the tax
 My pride has paid him there—he shall pay galling!
 Yet will I keep awhile the mask on, for
 The passion that consumes me, drinks my blood up,
 And prompts defiance both of earth and heaven
 To compass the possession of his sister!
 He is at hand!—now to receive my friend—
 Welcome, Alasco!

ALASCO enters.

Alas. Welcome every hour
 That brings me to my friend!

Alma. [*with over-acted energy*]. I am thy friend.

Alas. It were believed without that emphasis!
 Is anything wrong? Require I now a friend
 More than at any other time?

Alma. O no!

Alas. Almagro, more is written on thy brow
 Than thou think'st meet to trust thy tongue withal!
 That smile's too thin! I can see through it, man!
 It comes from the head, and not the heart; the which
 'Tis meant to hide, not show!

Alma. Doubt'st thou my truth?

Alas. Ay—thou'rt in earnest now! In honest earnest,
 Thou think'st, indeed, I do!—My own Almagro,
 I am too clear myself, to doubt thy truth,
 Or any other man's, unless, indeed,
 Upon most cogent reason. Listen to me!
 There are not wanting those who love me well,
 Whom I love well, that have essay'd to shake
 My faith in thee. When saw'st thou it was shaken?
 Have I not still return'd to thee, my friend,
 With open face and heart? Thou hast borne me hard—
 Too hard, in sooth, to justify endurance
 In any but a brother—till I have felt
 My tingling fingers coiling in my palm!—
 O had I struck thee then!—but, at the thought
 Of blow to thee, I could have struck myself;
 And never parted we at such a time,
 But I have held to thee my open palm
 As frank as now I do!

Alma. [*with an effort*]. As frank I take it.

Alas. What is the matter, man? I do not feel
 The pressure of your hand as I was wont:
 Ay, there it is! but comes upon the hint.

It used to come without! Man! you are thinking
Of something else than me! or else of me,
In other mood than you were wont to think.
Have I done anything?

Alma. No.

Alas. No? that's right.

What is it, then?

Alma. What?

Alas. What—Come! Come! You know
There's something. What is it?

Alma. There is no satisfying
The people!

Alas. Now 'tis coming! Well?—go on!

Alma. They are jealous of you.

Alas. Jealous, are they?—why?

Alma. Because you spared the King.

Alas. I never thought
To harm the King.

Alma. No?

Alas. No!

Alma. I thought you did!

Alas. You thought I did?—what! take his life, and he
In our power?—Lose my own first!—While he was free,
While he was able to dispute with us,
His power to oppress, and ours to right ourselves;
The argument, indeed, was life or death!
That's over!—at an end!—Take the King's life?
I'd slay the man that talk'd of touching it!

Alma. What did you then propose?

Alas. What I set out with!
Assurance of my sister's nuptial rights,
And full redress of the people's grievances.

Alma. Which you will get! [*Ironically.*]

Alas. Will get?—Be sure, I will!

Alma. Our friends believe they had been perfected
In the King's death.

Alas. Our friends believe like fools!
I'll not say, knives.—Is not the King our hostage?
Where lies his value? Is it in his life,
Or in his body, only?—While his friends
Believe they risk his life, to strike at ours,
Will they be quick to come to blows!—or rather
Will they not seek a parley?—treat with us?
Listen to our terms?—award them their due weight?
Grant them?—upon the Gospels ratify
A treaty with us, sworn to by the King himself?
Take the King's life!

Alma. Would I had thought of this
An hour ago!

Alas. Why?

Alma. I had been prepared
To justify you to the people.

Alas. Pshaw!
I'll justify myself.

Alma. I know him not,
He is positive when into action prick'd.
I have err'd in rating him too much a child,
And over-reach'd myself—I must recover,
With the hold I have upon his love for me.
Alasco!

Alas. Well!

Alma. Methinks was never pair
So link'd in love as we are! We should have been
Brothers!

Alas. And we are so!—are we not?
The worth of birth is but the right to love.
We love as well as brothers, do we not,
Without that right?—what are we then, but brothers?
Come you to flesh and blood?—as all mankind
Had but one parentage, in the great first,
All flesh and blood are one!

Alma. Yet there's a nearness
In affinity.

Alas. Marry, yes,—for cuffs as well
As huggings!—Brothers have been haters!—From
One womb spring many natures, as diverse
As the winds, the children of the common air!

Alma. *Alasco*, once you wish'd I were your brother,
By such a tie, as would have yet enrich'd
Our ample stock of love.

Alas. I did.

Alma. The Prince,
Thwarting my hopes, scarce ran, methinks, with thine,
Or I deceive myself.

Alas. You are not deceived,
And know it—Wherefore make a doubt of it?

Alma. Our surest wishes sometimes make them doubts,
Through wantonness to reassure themselves!
I should have been the husband of Olivia!

Alas. You should!—you had been, had my will been done.

Alma. I know your power was beggar to your will,
Whose vast abundance mock'd its penury!
Now haply turn'd to riches!—Friendship is
A godlike thing!

Alas. 'Tis perfect in itself!

So has the start of love, that's not content
Without its guerdon rich; to purchase which,
Crowns have been lost, and what surpasses them,
The grace of which they are but symbolical!
Whence blossoms richer than the garden's prime,
Supposing e'en the Hesperian fable truth,
Have broke their golden promise, and for fruit,
Given all their glorious hues to nourish poison!
But friendship, save its mood, seeks no delight:

Therein it all rejoices!—temperate—
 Without the fiery throbbings of the brain,
 And beatings of the heart!—unjealous!—pleased
 To gather hearts for those it cherishes,
 And of its own, making a goodly field,
 Where nothing springs, but healthy generous seed,
 Fair thoughts, pure feelings, sentiments sublime,
 To justify and grace its loved election!

Alma. Friends have done miracles for those they loved.

Alas. They have!—I wonder, my Almagro, what
 I would not do for thee?

Alma. There was a thing
 You might have done, and did not.

Alas. What was it?

Alma. You knew I loved!

Alas. I did, and help'd your love,
 Far as I could.

Alma. Not so, Alasco!

Alas. No?

Alma. You urged my suit, indeed, but not methinks
 With all that sturdy earnestness you owed me;
 Gavest way, to soon, to a girl's fantasy,
 And an old man's inclining!

Alas. Did I?

Alma. Yes.

Alas. I am sorry you should think so!

Alma. I am sorry

I should have cause to think so.—Look, Alasco:
 Had I a sister, by a friend beloved,
 Her wishes should incline the way I chose,
 Howe'er they strain'd diversely!

Alas. Ay!—indeed?

I think you are wrong!—A woman in affection
 Is steadfastness, or steadfastness is nothing.
 And they are fools who seek it.

Alma. They are fools

Who in the heart of very weakness, think
 To find so stern a thing.

Alas. Almagro!

Alma. Nay,

I know I speak harsh truths to you; and yet,
 Did I speak harsher, I'm your fastest friend!
 Where was your sister's love for you, Alasco,
 When she repell'd the suit you urged for me?
 Sisters love brothers, don't they?

Alas. Yes.

Alma. Methinks

Behoves such love be steadfast.

Alas. Certainly.

Alma. You pleaded for your friend with all your heart.

Alas. With all my heart and soul, Almagro.

Alma. Nay,

I'm sure you did—I am content you did—
But had been more so, with the proof of it

Alas. What proof would you have?

Alma. What proof would I have?—Success!
The only solid proof of earnestness!

Alas. Almagro!—

Alma. Yes, I know—your sister's heart
Was given to the Prince—That's past and gone, Alasco!
The heyday of their love is over, now!
From her deserted bed she now looks back
Upon the day he knelt to woo her thither,
Who leaves her now alone there!

Alas. Well, Almagro?

Alma. Thy sister is divorced.

Alas. They say she is.

Alma. What hinders her to be Almagro's wife?

Alas. Heav'n!—her own heart!—her father's honour!—
mine!—

Don't touch me there, Almagro!

Alma. Touch thee there!

Who touch'd thee there?—If she's divorced, she's free.

Alas. If she's divorced against her husband's will,
If she's divorced without her own default,
If she's divorced and yet the contract good—
Perfect, without a flaw, that made her a wife;
She is not free, Almagro!—She should die
Before she married thee!—What would you call
My sister?—What was she?—The paramour
Of the Prince?—What! mean you she was that, the which
Did any call her, he would put his tongue
In jeopardy; for by this honest hand
I would tear it from his throat!—Have a care, Almagro!
Men tell me thou art selfish!—and thou earnest
Too near a proof just now, in thine own aims,
To overlook the honour of thy friend!
Almagro, I'm a child, but yet a man!
Let me not find thee, what men say thou art—
Assured of that I would hate thee—I, Almagro!—
That never look'd upon my fellow-flesh
Without a kindness and a care for it!

Alma. I know it is thy nature.

[*Changing his tone.*

Alas. I have bragg'd;

But if I have, I have said the simple truth,
And, after all, where is the boast?—At best,
We are but what Heav'n made us! By no thought
Or labour of my own, I love my race,
Confide in them, and would do good to them!
It is the bias of my nature—which
Slept in my cradle, in the schoolroom waked,
And, all throughout my manhood, has held sway—
To joy in others' thriving!—When deserved—
Mark that!—I would not have pretension thrive

When not borne out by merit—'Tis as bad
 As that a lie should prosper!—Barring that,
 I fare the best when I see others banquet;
 Nor care to scramble for the upper seats
 At fortune's table—I have given them up,
 More oft, than I have ta'en them;—nor can I bear,
 Except in the sheer lack of worthiness,
 To turn my back on men who have their faults,
 Because, who has them not?—I am sure not I!—
 One kind of man alone I cannot brook—
 The man whose God is self!—But one such man,
 I bless Heaven fervently, I have ever known!
 And as fervently I pray to it,
 I ne'er may know another!—Let this pass—
 You say the people are displeased with me
 Touching the King. Is that all?

Alma. Something more—
 Affecting your fair sister.

Alas. What can it be?
 Think you I err'd to make my sister Regent?

Alma. Some soreness thereupon.

Alas. I thought it right;
 But if our friends think otherwise, 'tis well!
 I care not who is Regent, so the course
 Of things holds on.

Alma. I am glad you are of that mind.
 They meditate a change.

Alas. A change?—indeed!

Alma. And steps are taken to assemble them,
 And learn their will and pleasure.

Alas. Steps are taken?
 Why was not I consulted?

Alma. You are too easy,
 Too lax in the exacting of your rights!
 Men take advantage of you!—to say truth,
 I ne'er divined you cared to be consulted,
 Else had I put a clog upon their speed,
 Had check'd its downhill swiftiness.

Alas. I'm not pleased—
 And yet the people could not mean me wrong.
 Come, come, all's well!

Enter VELASQUEZ, CORTEZ, and NUNEZ, with People.

Velas. Well met, Alasco!

Cortez. And—

Well met, Almagro.—We have an errand, sirs,
 To both of you. The people are divided—
 Half wish Almagro Regent, half Alasco;
 All holding the same mind in this regard,
 That, in the strait we stand in, it is fit
 That one of you should hold the rule, and not

Alasco's sister. Which of you will give
His vote to place the other in her seat?

Velas. What do you say, Almagro?

Alma. Good Velasquez,
I am taken by surprise.

Alas. And so am I;

But I can speak at once—Almagro Regent!

All. Almagro Regent!

RUPHINO rushes in.

Ruph. No, no, no!—Alasco,
What have you done? I follow'd hither, fast
As my old limbs could bear me—but too late!
O son!—son—son! thy father's voice ascends
Against thy mad devotion to that man!
Whom now thy breath hath seated in command,
But to unseat, ere long, will call for blood!
O that in even balance should be held
The claims of virtue and depravity;
Of truth and falsehood; generosity;
And overweening heartless selfishness;
That the weak, good, in its simplicity,
Should cast its weight into the other scale,
And heave its own to the beam!—Friends—countrymen—
Undo what you have done!

Alas. It is too late.

Ruph. Still faithful 'gainst thyself!

Alma. Ruphino!—Sir!—

As to your years, with which your worth has grown,
Behoves me pay all reverence—observe
The first use which I make of that same power
Which you begrudge me hold. If mine, at home,
Supreme command; Alasco, rule abroad;
And, next to thee, Velasquez; whom, the more
He is bent to be my foe, the more will I
E'en as a friend entreat.

Nunez. 'Tis nobly said!

Alma. Away, Alasco! join the patriot host,
And take Velasquez with thee;—thou, the chief;
He, second in command.—My friend, embrace.
How say you, sir? Am I a man for thee
Or him to fear?—Health and success, my friend!
You, to bright gains; honours, and spoils of war!
I, to the care and drudgery of the state!

[Goes out, followed by the people, shouting.]

Ruph. This day, my son, we both shall recollect.

Velas. Alasco, come.

Ruph. 'Till evening wait, Velasquez.

Methinks you have forgot your sister, boy:
If not to take farewell, a word or two
Behoves you change with her before you go.
His sister would have speech with him, Velasquez!

Alas. Husband your speed, Velasquez, till I join you.

Velas. Nay, we shall start together; say an hour
Ere sunset. At the postern with your steed
An hour ere sunset shall you find me waiting.
Not till you join me shall I sally forth,
But wait for you at the postern with your steed.

[VELASQUEZ goes out.]

Ruph. What ponder you, Alasco?

Alas. Nothing.

Ruph. Son!

You are not ill?

Alas. No, no! Lead to my sister. [They go out.]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Corridor of the Dungeons.*

Enter ALMAGRO and PEDRO.

Alma. So this is thy domain?—a gloomy one!
When, yesterday, I ranged the prison-cells,
I little dream'd to find their custody
Committed to an old acquaintance. As
I told thee then, that old acquaintance may
Become my friend; and, if my friend, a rich,
Promoted one! Thou saw'st me, yesterday,
The same Almagro whom thou knew'st before,
Except the lead I took in this revolt,
And that, but second to Alasco. Now
Alasco gives me place; this hour, good Pedro,
Has placed me in the seat his sister fill'd!
Almagro rules in Saragossa now,
Almagro now is Regent. When we discoursed—
Anticipating this advancement, and
Aware that, from thy calling, thou couldst find me
Men of the mettle I might stand in need of—

Pedro. I recollect. The first is found—a Moor,
One that will do the work, whereto you set him,
Nor scan its quality.

Alma. The man I need!

Pedro. One who will serve you as he were your hand
That does your will, nor questions you thercon;
A stranger too, unknown in Saragossa!
Of hearing also, such as will not shame you.

Alma. The very man! When shall I see him?

Pedro. Now.

Alma. Bring him! [PEDRO goes out.] The man I need.
E'en upon thee

I may not count, for thou hast friends; he, none.

A tool, with friends, has but so many minds,
 May sway his own, and baffle his, he serves.
 I have won the game; but still, the stake's to get—
 To get, if needs, by force! I may not look
 To any that I know, for advance there;
 The stanchest there, might stop! I know not one
 I dare so much as e'en advise with there.
 Those who are heedless how Alasco fares,
 Would more than mutter, dared I breathe the thought
 Of trespass 'gainst the Rose of Arragon.

Enter PEDRO and OMER.

Alma. Is this the man?—his air is very stately!

Pedro. It is the carriage of his blood, my lord;
 Ne'er lack'd by its partaker.

Alma. It is well!

The reverend man I spoke of—have you found him?

Pedro. I have.

Alma. What says he?

Pedro. He too will be your hand.

Not more will question, 'less will do, your bidding.

Alma. Warn him to come to me ere nine this evening,
 Ere the third quarter turns.—Friend, do you heed
 A woman's tears? [To OMER,

Omer. They do not pierce the ear.

Her shrieks do, and as little they would move me.

Alma. What would you stop at, to obey the will
 Of him you served?

Omer. At nothing till 'twas done!

Alma. Not blood?

Omer. No more, sir, than the blade which sheds it.

Alma. Wait by my side.—Advancement ne'er is bought,
 But at some cost of friends. I know not, now,
 Who loves me. Pry about you.—As we go
 I'll tell you where my heart and soul have cast—
 Their all of being on!

Omer. An enemy,

Whom you would overcome? He is at your feet!

Alma. An enemy whom giv'st thou to mine arms,
 I'll fall at yours, as my good angel ever!

Omer. A woman!—Can't you strain her to your mood
 Without my help?—You Christians there are wrong,
 What we as minions treat, to rate as idols!
 You flatter—sue—implore!—Possession speaks
 Our wishes!

Alma. Well you please me, thus to talk.

Thanks, Pedro!—Come!—keep near me. Well you please me.
[They go out.]

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in the Citadel.**Enter ALASCO and OLIVIA.**Alas.* Olivia!*Olivia.* Well, my brother?*Alas.* It is long

Since you and I have talk'd.

Olivia. There was a timeWe had not been so long apart, Alasco,
At liberty to meet!*Alas.* There was a time

We had one heart!—That time is past!

Olivia. How long?*Alas.* E'er since the hour you spurn'd your brother's friend,
His soul's election, from among the prime
Acknowledged of his race, and gave your heart
To throne a stranger.*Olivia.* He deserved it, brother!*Alas.* No, not thy heart!—The throne that he was born to,
I grant him worthy of, but not thy heart!
There is but one such throne; as for the other,
There are a hundred such—ay, maybe, better!
How much, Olivia, did it weigh with you
That he, you chose, was heir unto a throne?*Olivia.* Brother!—[*Much hurt.*]*Alas.* I know! forgive me! Not a doit!
Oh! my Olivia! lives the man durst slight thee,
And do I so? That inadvertent wrong
Hath, more than argument, set all to rights!
Being here to blame, I have been all to blame!
Forgive me! Love me! Take me to your heart
Again, as I do thee to mine, my sister!*Olivia.* How like a new gift is old love restored!
How seems it richer, though the very same!
How the soul opens to receive it, wider
Than e'er it did before!—Alasco! now
I'll show thee, brother, I have all along
Deserved thy love, deserving it e'en there
Where thou account'st me wanting!*Alas.* Not a wordOf that again! you prized the Prince's worth,
Before you knew his title; which he doff'd,
Lest, seeking love, he might ambition meet,
And take it for its betters! You were wed
Before you knew you were a prince's wife!
Have you forgiven me?*Olivia.* Have I not, my brother?But, for mine own content, Alasco, hear me,
While for thy sister's coldness to thy friend
I give thee now her reason.

Alas. Give it me,
But for thine own content; not mine, Olivia:—
Go on! Why do you hesitate? The thing
You wish'd to tell me, and I would not hear,
And then wish'd more to tell me; now I would hear it,
Why do you hesitate to tell?

Olivia. Alasco,
You are so rash when you are angry.

Alas. [*Roused.*] Ay—
Is there chance of that?

Olivia. No, no!

Alas. [*Most impatiently.*] There is!

Olivia. You see!

Wisely I kept it from thee at the time;
Else, bloodshed had ensued!

Alas. [*With extreme impatience.*] Bloodshed! for what?

Olivia. Outrage long past!

Alas. [*Furiously.*] Outrage!—[*Recollects himself.*] Long past
is it?

Then tell it me, no fear I shall be rash!
No, nor yet angry! I shall look upon it
As a thing that's dead, and no more wage war with it
Than I would with a corse! Almagro offer'd thee
No outrage? [*Furiously.*]

Olivia. There again!

Alas. [*Recovering himself.*] And if he did—
'Tis past and gone; so, dead.—Go on, Olivia,
Go on, my sister!

Olivia. You remember, don't you,
From long-protracted absence, coming home,
And finding me, whom you had left a girl,
Stolen into womanhood? Stolen, I may say;
For at that stage I had, indeed, arrived
Without my father's note, or e'en my own;
So change, by progress still before our eyes,
Is oft-times past, before we dream 'tis near.

Alas. That time, Olivia, I remember well!
Then first I felt I was a brother, when
The girl, I left, I found not; but, instead,
A woman newly ripen'd!—You had on
The gear of other times! 'Twas quite outgrown,
And scantiest there where nature's bounty most
Upbraided lack of fulness! Oh, what thoughts
Of risks and wrongs, by woman run and borne,
Shot through my brain, succeeding one another
As lightning-flashes, when the welkin round
Is thick with thunder-storms!—awakening in me
Tinglings of feelings never touch'd before,
And summoning almost in palpable,
Distinct embodiment, the household virtues
To pass in solemn, stern array before me—
Among them honour chief, and chastity!

I sprang to thee and o'er thy shoulders threw
 Thy kerchief, snatch'd from thy surpris'd hand!
 The change pass'd o'er thee then, from frankest joy
 To see me back, to strangest wonderment!
 The change from that, to most alarm'd confusion,
 As, in a moment, burst on thee the thought
 What time had done, thou ne'er hadst ta'en account of,
 Till then reveal'd by that, thy brother's act!
 The statue that thou stood'st except the blush
 Which, prompted by that act, thy heart call'd up
 As 'twere to veil thy cheek, and answer for
 Thy earth-fix'd eye, that life had cast it there!
 I shall be old when I forget the hour
 I threw that kerchief o'er thee!

Olivia. [*Hesitating.*] Brother!

Alas. Well?

Olivia. [*Hesitating.*] One day—

Alas. Go on! what happen'd thee that day?

Olivia. [*Still hesitating.*] That kerchief—

Alas. Well?

Olivia. I cannot tell it thee!

I durst not even breathe it to my father!

[*Overpowered with confusion, and throwing herself on
 ALASCO'S neck.*]

Alas. You need not! Some one pluck'd it off!—Who
 was it?

Who was it?—fool!—who was it but Almagro!

The flood of light a little chink lets in!

How blind a man may be, yet think he sees!

How fast asleep, yet fancy he's awake!

How may he be cajoled—robb'd—cozen'd—gull'd—

Where for fair dealing he would stake his life,

As free as risk a counter on a card

With all the odds to back him!—it is clear!

Almagro's heart is rotten!—What have I done?

Olivia. What have you done, my brother!

Alas. What have I done?

You know, and ask!—Why, made Almagro Regent!

Almagro Regent, in my sister's place!

Given him command over myself, and worse,

O'er thee, to whom he did that violence

Turns all my blood to fire! how mayst thou fare.

Olivia. Remember you your comment, once you read
 The story of Lucrece to me? You said

She used too late her dagger—that she chose.

Most ill, the stain itself contracting, rather

Than bear the slanderous imputation,

Howe'er so base-begotten; that her error

The custom of her time could not atone for;

That she was more to pride a martyr, than

To chastity! unworthy setting up

A sample of a woman fit to copy!

Alas. Those very words thy brother's heart spoke to thee!

Olivia. Those very words thy sister's heart set down,
Never to be obliterated!—see! [*Drawing forth a dagger.*]

Alas. Thou shalt not come to such extremity!

O, let me think awhile my sister—go—

This is no home for thee!—Go!—Hold thee, sister,

In readiness to bear me company!

But let me with myself awhile commune,

'There's something here wants calming—such a sea

Cannot at once go down, and give us leave

To put the vessel on her course again!

Olivia. Bless thee, Alasco!

[*Going.*]

Alas. Sister, stay!—The King!—

His life's in jeopardy!

Olivia. The King is safe!

I fear'd thee, brother,—durst not breathe it to thee!—

But he escaped last night by my contrivance!

Alas. O woman! clear in apprehension—prompt

In action, when her sympathies arouse her!

A mountain hast thou heaved from off my soul,

And for reproaches, take my blessings with thee!

Now leave me for a while!

Olivia. My heart sinks in me

At thought of losing sight of thee, my brother! [*Goes out.*]

Alas. How many things come back upon me, now,

That pass'd me by, before, unheeded by me,

To prove Almagro wanting!—There is Gomez!—

Gomez, he told me was a wretch!—had fail'd him

When trusted by him!—Now he hugs him!—Ay,

Gomez is now of service! There's Velasquez,

A man far likelier to overlook,

Than note a fault.—Almagro must have play'd

The viper to him, and Velasquez shuns him,

Lest he be stung again. There's Henriquez,

Blotches from head to foot, believe Almagro,

And he was hand in glove with him before,

For all his leprosy, when Henriquez

Was factor to his fortunes.—Blind Alasco!

Now I bethink me, where are Pedro, Carlos,

And twenty others, once his good companions?

True men and kindly!—Where are they? gone from him!

He comes!—untimely!—would I could avoid him.

Enter ALMAGRO and THERESA.

Alma. You know your duty—see that you perform it.

Let the reward that I have promised you

Remind you of obedience. Suffer her not

Out of your sight—nor be thrust off—nor humour'd;

Your answer—forced to it—"The Regent wills it."

Not in a hurry though!

Ther. I shall observe.

[*Goes out.*]

Alma. Now am I jocund as the mariner
 Whose progress e'en before his reckoning runs,
 And, ere expected, shows his port to him—
 Whose vessel seems belovéd of the winds,
 Which follow her where'er she turns her prow.
 I am Regent!—That is power achieved—Alasco
 Speeds to the army, and Velasquez, with him.
 That is immunity to use my power!
 Olivia stays in Saragossa—that
 Is love achieved.—Oh! Opportunity!
 Thou favourer of wishes, com'st thou to me,
 And shall I let thee go again, and say
 Thou left'st me mine unblest?—No!—though I craved
 The help of fraud or force to effect possession.
 Fair measures first I'll try—they bring our ends
 Most happily about. So be't. Let's see—
 A quarrel is to be made up—a fault
 Acknowledged and atoned for—so, from foes,
 We turn to friends.—That's easy—but to turn
 From friends to lovers—there's the feat that taxes
 Both wit and labour! There's Ruphino, though—
 He hates me! Well!—the good of the republic
 May crave his absence hence—some honourable
 Employment—like Velasquez, and his son's!
 We'll find him such.—So now, to see Olivia;
 Admit my error, own it past forgiveness—
 The very surest way to make it venial—
 Dilate on my contrition—sigh for friendship,
 Without a hope of it—a warranty
 Especial and infallible that she
 Will find me hope enough—and here succeeding,
 To fair or foul means trust the rest;—

[*Going towards OLIVIA's apartment, meets ALASCO.*
Alasco!—

Here yet?—I swear thou art still a child, as much
 As in thy play-time years!

Alas. Almagro!—

Alma. Peace!

Thou mak'st me mad!—What are the thews of manhood
 Without the thoughts and deeds?—In patience' name,
 If thou wouldst bide with men, and rank with them,
 Be one of them, and act like them!—Balance here,
 Lounging upon the heel that should be smoking
 With rowels red with speed, at least ten leagues
 By this from Saragossa!

Alas. But, Almagro—

Alma. Nay, talk to children, not to me!—By our Lady,
 Thou art not a man!—A feebleness, Alasco,
 There is about you, hateful to my nature!
 An easiness that treats, as lightest things,
 Matters of gravest moment.—We have placed
 Our hopes and fears, our liberties and lives,

In a man's hands, as we believed; and lo!
He turns out to be a boy!

Alas. By your favour—

Alma. 'Sdeath!

'Tis injury to me!—foul injury

Return'd for all the good I have done for you!

How will men talk?—what will my credit come to,

For judgment or for justice? Fifty others

Had leap'd at such a post, not one of whom

Had so approved himself unworthy of it,

As thou hast done! How shall I make defence,

When they allege to me, they know your charger

Stood cooling his mettle at the gate, the while

You play'd the page, in your sister's antechamber!

Alas. Where thou play'st visitor!—What brought thee
hither?

Almagro!—mark!—a brother speaks to you,

And tells you that the floor you stand upon

Henceforth to you is interdicted ground!

Mark!—interdicted by a brother's honour!

Who holds the trespasser 'gainst his commands

Responsible with his blood!

Alma. To me, Alasco!—

Do you say this to me?—to me—your friend?

Alas. Is it so, Almagro?—Art thou Alasco's friend?

Alma. Can I be otherwise?

Alas. Almagro, tell me,

Are you a man of whom his friend can say,

He knows his heart whene'er he hears his tongue;

Or one whose tongue alleges of his heart

Things that abide not there?

Alma. What do you mean?

Alas. What I say!—Almagro, are you my friend indeed?

Where's the reply ere well the question's done,

That, from loved lips, can't brook the loving wrong,

But, from one word divining all the rest,

The mouth of the propounder stops with flouts,

Which, while they chafe, assure him. Art thou my friend?

You are sullen!—Ill at ease, I will not say—

Why did you start when I said—"Ill at ease?"

You are *not* my friend!—when you declared you were so,

You spoke what was not true!

Alma. Sir!

Alas. Saint Iago!

'Tis come to "Sir!" The truth is out at last, then!

'Tis come to "Sir!" 'twixt you and me! There's chance then

That it may come to blows!—Is there, Almagro?

"Sir"—'Tis as clear as day!—It could not be!

The thing's impossible.

Alma. What is impossible?

Alas. That a strong stream should stop with frost, nor give
The eye of the observer time to wink,

Ere what was flood is ice.—I have been basking
In summer, dreaming on a bank of snow,
And freezing now awake! “Sir”—

Alma. You forget
I am Regent!

Alas. You are Regent?—Oh, you are Regent!
True!—true!—you are another kind of man!—
Of all anomalies, the most outrageous
Is this—that circumstances should make the man
More that the man himself—just as if men
Were no wit better than the meats they feed on,
Whose value varies by the mode of dressing;
That what, to-day, will bring one pistole only,
By change of cookery brings five to-morrow!
You are Regent? 'Tis too bad!—The brute, in this,
Fares far more rationally than his master,
For he is rated by his own properties,
And gives rank to kennel—takes none from it!
Who made you Regent?

Alma. Who?—the people!

Alas. I!

Alma. 'Tis false!

Alas. Ha! say you so?—Come on then! you're
A traitor!

Alma. What?

Alas. You heard!—Is it possible?
Then was it true what some one told me once,
That when he threaten'd thee with chastisement,
Whereof he gave thee earnest with his tongue,
In terms the bearer better were struck dead,
Than unrevenged survive them, thou didst stand
E'en thus.

Alma. How?

Alas. Why the 'haviour of a sheet!
Anger, I know, turns pale as well as red;
But if it lacks the hue, it has the blow!—
My sister, recreant!—I will not draw
On one that dares not draw on me again,
Nor even wag my tongue at such a man!
“Man!” do I say?—Well, “man.”—I scorn to rail!

[*RUPHINO enters in the back-ground, and stopping
short, half-retires again.*]

Alma. Alasco! you have spurn'd me!—shamefully
Aspersed my manhood!—and I bear it all,
For I am not a friend plays fast and loose!
Nay, wrong me more!—I will the more forbear.
Thou doubt'st it?—but a proof can face a doubt!
And I have one at hand, will make thee writhe,
That ever thou misus'dst me. Wait a little,
I'll give thee time to cool,—provide my proof;
And then return, and we are friends again!

Ruph. Alasco!

[*Goes out.
Hastily advancing.*]

Alas. Father!

Ruph. Hast thou been, Alasco,
A son to me?

Alas. In love,—but not in duty!

Ruph. In duty too, dost thou my bidding now!
Wilt do it?

Alas. Yes!

Ruph. Wilt swear to do it?

Alas. Yes;

I swear!

Ruph. He hears thee who remembers, boy!
Forthwith depart for thy command.—Velasquez
Waits with thy courser at the postern.—Fly!
Thou'lt find within his breast another heart
True to thee as thine own!—Confide in him!—

Alas. Almagro!

Ruph. Peace!—Almagro means thee evil!
Thy sister's honour is in jeopardy—
I know what thou wouldst say.—It is too late!
She could not fly with thee, were she prepared,
Or were there means at hand, or were there time
To furnish them. She is betray'd!—beset!—
The safety which she cannot fly to,—thou
Must bring to her, my son, and speedily—
It must come speedily, if it come at all!

Alas. Why, father!

Ruph. What!—in my extremity
Cannot I find a friend in my own son!
Thy sister, by Almagro's treason warn'd,
Has set the King at liberty, and word
Was by his secret escort brought that he
Had to the patriot force commission sent
With terms of such redress, as their demands,
O'erbearing as they were, durst ne'er lift eye to!
I should not wonder, met you now advancing,
And hand in hand, those who the other day
Bore weapons against weapons! There is rescue!
Safety! for me, thy sister!—all of us!
Away—away,—not by the common stair—
Almagro now ascends it, with his guards!
They come for thee—believe me for this once!
This passage to thy sister, by her lord
Reveal'd, by her to me,—and which were now
Portal to liberty, were she not watch'd
By spies, who dog her every footfall—safe
Without the postern will conduct thee.—Fly—
No word!—Thy oath!—Thy sister's honour!—Fly!

[ALASCO goes out.]

Enter ALMAGRO with Guards, and attended by NUNEZ and OMER.

Alma. [Speaking as he enters.] Secure the traitor!—only
now his sword
Was pointed 'gainst your Regent's heart.

Nunez. My lord,
Alasco is not here!—This is his father.

Alma. Not here!—I left him here!—where is the traitor?

Ruph. Inquire, Almagro, of thyself for him!

Alma. Where is thy son?

Ruph. Safe, monster, from thy fangs!

Alma. What! fled!—Go seek him in the room beyond.
Some nook will give him to you.—He could not fly!
Myself stood sentry on the stair.

[*All go out but ALMAGRO and RUPHINO.*

Ruph. You did?

You needs must love the friend you watch so well!

Alma. You mock at things make other men look
grave.

Ruph. What things?

Alma. Bonds!—maybe death!

Ruph. O Heav'n! this man
To talk of bonds and death to me that was
More than his equal yesterday!—'Tis thus
Fair enterprise falls into disrepute,
And the just fight is lost!—Some hollow heart
Makes common cause with the abettors; toils,
Suffers perhaps; draws on himself all eyes,
All trust, until their cause and he be one;
When gets he all he asks for,—sought for,—power!
The which, awhile, he wields to profit them;
But, now secure of, casts the mask aside,
Employs for his own ends, without consent
Of man or angel, until those that groan'd
At evil days gone by, now shake the head
And wish them back again!

Alma. Thy life's near spent!
Husband the little that remains of it.

Ruph. He husbands life who looks not to its length
But use, and uses it to glorify
The giver!

Alma. Dotard!—Hither comes your son!

Ruph. Turn not your face aside, nor move away;
You need not shrink from him, he does not come!

Re-enter NUNEZ and the others.

Alma. Is he not found?

Nunez. No!

Alma. No? He must be here!
He pass'd not forth!—I swear he pass'd not forth.
Where is your son, old man?—What smile you at?

Ruph. At your simplicity, Almagro.

Alma. Ay!

Ruph. Ay, sir, to ask a father for his son,
That you may give him up to butchery!
He is safe, sir, safe!—His father's life upon it!

Alma. Maybe!—Maybe!—He must be found!

Enter CORTEZ, hastily.

Cortez. The Regent?

Alma. Here, sir!

Cortez. Obedient to your highness' will,
I sought the King, in straiter custody
To place him.

Alma. Well, sir!—and you found him?

Cortez. No.

Alma. Treason on every side!—Produce your son!

Ruph. I cannot!

Alma. Tell us where you have bestow'd him.

Ruph. I will not!

Alma. Take him to the rack!

Ruph. The rack!—

What!—an old man like me?—Well, then, the rack!
Thou mock'st its strength, to waste it on a straw!

Nunez. My lord, forbear!

Alma. What!—Nunez?

Nunez. To this pass

Let it not come.

Cortez. Give ear, my lord, to Nunez!

Alma. Talk to a whirlwind!—Am I Regent, Cortez;
Or you, or Nunez?

Nunez. Hand will I have none
In such a deed.

Cortez. Nor I.

Alma. You will not?—Ay!—

Omer,—See it done!—You may withdraw, my friends.

[*NUNEZ and CORTEZ retire.*]

Away with him!

Ruph. When the command shall come
That summons thee away, thou'lt shrink from it,
As never shall my body from the rack!

[*RUPHINO is taken out by OMER and Guards.*]

Alma. Hence!—Now have I thought what Chaos was,
Before the world sprung out of it!—Immense
Perplexity of things!—Nothing, itself!
Naught individuality, but merging
Into some other thing. Ambition, Love,
Hatred, Revenge, Determination, Fear,
All holding sway together, but with strife
That makes a mock of rule! I cannot see
The light for darkness; darkness fails with light!
I cannot stop,—nor yet, for stops, go on!—
I am not anywhere,—yet everywhere!
Somewhere to fix!—some shape to give resolve!
It takes a form, and straightway vanishes
Into some other—then another yet,
Until confusion reels!

Enter PEDRO.

Pedro. My lord!

Alma. Well, Pedro?
Has the old man confess'd?

Pedro. No.

Alma. No!—Enough;
Remove him from the rack!

Pedro. That duty, death
Has spared us.

Alma. Dead?

Pedro. He is dead!

Alma. I feel his frost!

He freezes more than I, but feels it not!
As with the thunder comes the clearing up,
So ends this shock my chaos, and my thoughts
Begin to settle—into ruin!—Ruin?—
Come ruin, then, but not to me alone! [Goes out.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Ante-room to OLIVIA's Chamber.*

*Two Attendants variously occupied—a knock at the door—which
one of them opens.*

Enter ALMAGRO, ANTHONIO, and OMER.

Alma. You are dismiss'd till morning.—You will find
Your couches in the quarter that we spoke of.—
Withdraw; and mind, thanks but precede rewards,
Not stand for them, with us! Meantime we thank you.
Good night.—

[Attendants go out, ALMAGRO locks the door after
them.

Antonio!

[ANTHONIO comes forward.

Are you a man of nerve?

Anth. I dare aver I am.

Alma. 'Tis a great property,
Which more avails men in this world of barter
Than what they buy or sell;—you know what I mean?
The nerve that gains its point, no matter how!
You will perform the ceremony?

Anth. Yes.

Alma. Howe'er she may protest, gainsay, entreat,
Threaten, change colour, weep, shriek, swoon away—
It may come to that—in any case whatever,
You will not halt, but on?

Anth. I shall go on!

Alma. And I shall render the responses, both
For her, and for myself. Retire and wait

In the Oratory—That's the door to it.— [ANTONIO goes out, Omer !

Omer. My lord !

Alma. 'Tis likely, as I told you,
Your aid may stead me ; in which case, approve
The Moor may boast in you a worthy son.
You will see her tears, as though you saw them not !
And hear her cries, as though you heard them not !
And limbs, whose tenderness dissuades enforcement,
Reply to as the vice would, say it held them !
Behind these hangings take thy station, till
My summons asks thy aid—till then keep still !

Omer. I shall observe, my lord. [OMER conceals himself.

Alma. And I reward !
'Tis near the time she makes her toilet up
For the night.—Anon she'll summon her attendants,
And missing their reply, no doubt come forth.

[The clock strikes.

Hark !—Her remembrancer !—Listen !

Olivia [within]. Therese !

Alma. Well answer'd, silence !

Olivia. What !—Therese !—Therese !

Christina, where are you ?

[Enters, without perceiving ALMAGRO, who retires a little.

Where are my maids ?

I am left alone by them—and purposely !

I am sure of it !—Alasco does not come,

Nor message has he sent me !—Flight he talk'd of,

And still am I in Saragossa ! Oh !

What mountain huge and inaccessible

Has fate heaved up between us ?—Has he seen

Almagro ? tax'd him with the shame he did me ?

And, for his honest rashness, answer'd with

His liberty—perhaps his life ? That man

Is match for all extremities !—That man,

I have heard my father say, to gain his end,

Would stop at nought—not blood !—My father, too !

'Tis past the time he used to visit me,

An hour ; nor has he come—no word from him !

My motions watch'd—egress, debarr'd me, from

The quarters set apart for me !—the cause,

Reasons of state—"the Regent's will ;" but why

His will, or why those reasons, held from me—

The door ! perhaps 'tis free. Lock'd on me still !

[Tries to open it.

Heaven is not lock'd !—There is my only refuge !

I'll in, nor other couch enjoy to-night

Save what my knees can make them of the ground,

Whence shall my soul look up to heaven till morning !

[Retiring, is intercepted by ALMAGRO.

Almagro !

Alma. Not so fast, Olivia—stop ;
Or, if you will return into your chamber,
I'll pass along with you.

Olivia. Ho!—help there !

Alma. [*Grasping her wrist.*] Silence !
Shriek not !

Olivia. My wrist is broken, sir.

Alma. I grasp'd it,
But not with undue force.

Olivia. Look there !—the blood
In answer to your fingers !—Fie !—a man
And use a woman so ! Where are my women !—
Wherefore attend they not ?—why not obey
My summons ?—where are they ?

Alma. Hence, by my orders ;
Far out of reach of hearing—as all others
Who might intrude upon the conference
I mean to hold with you !—You will call in vain !

Olivia. Confer with thee !—here ?—at this time o' night,
Alone ?—a man ?—and one I shudder at
In company, and in the open day ?
Confer !—Begone, sir !—If respect, on thy part,
Does not instruct thee to recross my threshold,
Let loathing upon mine ! Think what I am, sir,
And if thou hast forgot thou art a man,
Let that remind thee on't, and make thee blush,
And drive thee from my presence !

Alma. What art thou ?

Olivia. What am I, sir ?—a wife !—I am a wife !—
A name that's haply borne by one that's weak,
But gives a power to her, to cope with which,
He that would mock her must make up his mind
To abide the wrath of the stern sanctities
Which, in the names of father, brother, husband,
Protect the wearer's honour !

Alma. With your leave,
At least a word or two before we part.

Olivia. No ! not a syllable !

Alma. Without your leave, then !

Olivia. Dare you compel me ?

Alma. If you force me !—Girl,
You are in my power !

Olivia. Heavens ! and for this same man
My brother would have laid his life down ! [*To herself.*]

Where

Is my brother ?—At the thought of strait to him,
Danger or worse, how, all at once, my heart
Casts off the shackles of congealing fear,
And feels at large, with all its faculties !

[*Resolutely approaches ALMAGRO, without looking at
him, through abhorrence.*]

Almagro, where is my brother ?

Almagro. [*Confounded momentarily.*] Where!

Olivia. Take time;

The answer's not at hand—not to be found
Except by dint of searching for't—take time!

Yet why delay at all?—Truth has no answer.
Save one—if that won't serve, there's falsehood with
A thousand!—Take the first of them—from first
To last, they are all the same!—Is he alive?

Alma. He is!

Olivia. Where is he?

Alma. Gone to his command,

As I suppose.

Olivia. As you suppose! You met
Before he went?

Alma. I think we did.

Olivia. You think!

You had no words?

Alma. Words!

Olivia. Words! You did not quarrel?

Alma. Quarrel!

Olivia. No mortal strife fell out between you?

No swords were drawn, nor daggers, yet, pluck'd forth,
Were there?

Alma. My hand fall from my side, if sword
Or dagger quitted sheath of mine to-day!

Olivia. [*Aside.*] No thunder yet, and thunder-clouds all
round!

Out of such pitch and wrack a bolt must come!—

My father! how is it with him? *Almagro,*

How fares it with my father? where is he?

Or access, hither, is prevented him,

Or, hence, he bears my brother company;

Or something or another has befallen him.

Why don't you speak, *Almagro*? [*Looking at him.*] Gracious
powers!

Your face, which scarce till now I lifted eye to,

Is not the same! but changed, and horribly.

How you remind me of a wretch I saw

Taken in the act of murder once! He had pass'd me

An hour before, a hale young man. The change

An hour had made in him! He had aged a life

In that brief hour—and so have you since last

I look'd upon you, near as brief a lapse!

Almagro, where is my father? Tell me, man!

What takes away your breath, or strikes you dumb?—

I am not your accusing spirit—I am only

My father's child! Are you his murderer?—

He is murder'd!

Alma. [*by an effort recovering himself.*] Well may wonder
gasp to meet,

From lips so loved, question of act so hateful!

Listen and interrupt me not.—Thy vows

Thy father-King has all absolved thee from ;
 Thou art free to wed again, and wed to me
 This very hour shall see thee !

Olivia. Wed to thee !

Alma. You heard me, did you not ?

Olivia. Hast thou encounter'd

The horror of the wolf-pack, as, at night,
 The howl at distance on the mountain road
 Admonish'd thee, when hunger was abroad
 Roaming ravine and steep, cut off from food,
 As the earth lay entomb'd in frozen snow ?
 I have, until my blood almost congeal'd,
 My joints began to lose their faculty,
 And, but for help, I must have dropp'd and lain,
 Incapable of motion as a stone !

'Twas nothing to the thought of wedding thee !—
 Though that I know a thing impossible !—
 Not with the wolf-pack so ! knew I the track
 The famish'd monsters would be sure to come ;
 Sooner would I lie in it, bound hand and foot,
 Than risk the chance would make me bride to thee !

Thy hand, presenting me the bridal ring,
 I would recoil from as it brought to me
 My brother's corse ! Yea, as 'twere reeking with
 My father's blood !—Preserve me, Heaven ! he looks
 Again the very heart and soul of murder !

Alma. [*Recovering himself.*] I'll speak to thee once more
 and then I'll act.

Observe ! Within this quarter, where thou bidest,
 There breathe not any can be hindrance to me !
 The forms and agents, that make man and wife
 Are ready !—Sure as in that chamber lies
 Thy couch, and his, thou call'dst aforetime lord—
 That couch receives another lord to-night !
 Consent !

Olivia. I think—and madden while I think !
 O husband, where art thou !—Alasco !—Father !
 A wife ! a child !—a sister !—and no help !

Alma. Consent !—provoke not force !

Olivia. I dare you, wretch !

Ay, woman as I am—weak and alone—
 I execrate, abhor you, and defy you !

Alma. What, ho !—within there !

[*OMER and ANTHONIO advance.*]

Olivia. [*Draws a dagger.*] Is it so ? behold, then !
 This talisman will I defeat thee with,
 Summoning him, with whom, to side with me,
 I am more than match for all who come against me !
 Witness, e'en you, [*to OMER and ANTHONIO*] the act that
 wrecks my life,

To save my honour, is not mine, but his
 Who on this dread extremity impels me !—

Mine honour!—precious for itself, past life,
But doubly precious for my dear lord's sake;
In faith to whom my heart pours out the blood,
No drop of which was e'er rebellious to him.

[OMER arrests her arm as she is going to stab herself;
she struggles desperately with him—and, at last, falls
fainting into his arms.

Alma. Prevent her—Oh, well done!—What, is she dead?

[Trumpet at a great distance.

Omer. She has fainted.

Alma. Hark!—what hear you!

Omer. I mistake,
Or 'tis a trumpet.

Alma. From without the walls?

Omer. I thought so.

Alma. There it is again!—It speaks——

Omer. Like a friend.

Alma. I hope so.

Cortez [without]. Where is the Regent?

Alma. [Unlocking the door.] Here!

Enter CORTEZ.

Cortez. Alasco and the King, their powers combined,
Approach the gates—A herald in their names
Demands admittance, which the crowd, not only,
But e'en the soldiery, to yield incline.
Ruphino's death is bruited far and wide,
And discontent thereon is open-mouth'd.
Still of your special friends the most stand true,
The which to keep behoves you show yourself.

Alma. I come to them!—Away!—I follow you.

[CORTEZ goes out.

Observe my signet—should I send it to you, [To OMER, aside.
The purpose now you balk'd yourself effect.

'Tis but her own intent that you fulfil;

So may the act light on your conscience sit.

That done, you know where lie my coffers—Take

The key and help yourself!—Attend me, father!

[Goes out with ANTHONIO. Alarum and tumult, without.

Re-enter the Priest.

Priest. This signet from the Regent.

Omer. What has happen'd?

Priest. Almagro, striving to retain the city,
Was by his own abettors overborne.

The gates have welcomed in their former master,

With whom Alasco enters now; which issue

As soon as he foresaw, Almagro gave

This signet to me with injunction strict

To place it in thy hand. I pray thee, Moor,

What means it?

Omer. What concerns not thee to know!

Priest. Why whither wouldst thou take her? That way lies Her chamber.

Omer. Pay no heed to what I do!—

Nor follow me!—The task I've ta'en in hand

Abides not lookers on! Stay where thou art!

[*Shows the dagger.*] Look to thyself! Dismiss all heed of me.
[*Bears OLIVIA off.*]

Priest. I little dream'd of this! That weapon, now,

So bright, how will it show anon? I thank

The Moor, for wishing me away! Too much

My share, already, in the deed of blood,

He goes to do! Might I not stop it? No!

He knows my business here!—I am compromised!

Say that I brought him to the scaffold, thither

He would not pass alone! Clean hands behoves

The man who dares to prate of filthy ones! [Goes out.]

SCENE II.—*The Corridor of the Palace.*

Enter VELASQUEZ and ANDREAS, meeting NUNEZ.

Velas. Saw you Alasco, as you came along?

Nunez. No, sir.

Velas. The same response I meet from all:

Strange, how I lost him all at once!—We enter'd

The citadel together! Where can he be?

Only a word or two I changed with one,

Apart, who drew me to confer with him,

And straight returning found Alasco vanish'd.

Nunez. Remember'st who was with him?

Velas. Cortez.

Nunez. Right!

Myself remark'd them—overheard them speaking,

Touching the manner of Ruphino's murder,

The while Almagro, guarded, walk'd before.

Velas. Almagro? You remind me now of him.

Him, also, did I miss.

Nunez. At the same time?

Where'er they are, most like they are together!

Velas. The chance o'erleaps your guess—Be sure they are!

At such a juncture, save his father's death,

And him the hated instrument of it, nothing

Could so engross Alasco that he leaves

The throne untended that gives amnesty

To wide revolt; and, for the grace it deigns,

Receives whole hearts with thrice-sworn homage back!

Let's search for good Alasco.—Near Almagro,

Chain'd though he were already—he's no match,

For such a maze of wily villany!

Speed—Bestir yourself—He must be found! [They go out.]

SCENE III.—*The Dungeon of Torture. Around, the various implements. In the front, on one side, the rack ; on the other, the block.*

Enter ALASCO,—stops and looks after him.

Alas. Why do you hesitate? Come in, Almagro!
Come in.

Enter ALMAGRO, PEDRO, OMER, and Guards.

Alma. A strange place this for conference!

Alas. It is a silent and retired place:

What fitter then? Here are no eaves-droppers!

No thin partitions which invite the ear

While they repel the eye!—Free speech may here

Make free! Your sword, good jailer, leave with me,

And lay it noiselessly on yonder bench;

Then, with your friends retire; and as you go,

Make fast the door. An hour hence, come again!—

By then we shall have done. There for your pains.

[Aside to Jailer.

Gives a purse to the Jailer, who retires with Guards, locking the door after them, having previously laid his sword as directed. OMER remains concealed.

Alma. Why does he lock the dungeon door?

Alas. To keep

Intrusion out. Such friends as you and I,

Sharing their hearts loving with one another,

Endure not bystanders when they confer!

Is it not so?

Alma. Why are we here?

Alas. Almagro!

Why are we anywhere but by the will

Of Heaven?—Its will be done!—Will you say so?

Alma. Why should I not?

Alas. Why, Heaven has given command

To men, they shall not murder; and 'tis written,

Who sheddeth blood shall bleed!—Sit down, Almagro,

On yonder engine.—I shall seat me here;

Such things awaken thoughts of seriousness,

And serious is the work we have in hand!—

Won't you sit down?—Decline you the fair seat?

You shrink from it! You are a man of ruth!

You know full well it is the couch of groans,—

Of sweat-drops, wrung by dint of agony,—

Of death-pangs, thick and sharp, though lingering,

In one of which more writhing, than *he* knows

Who, limb by limb, is broken on the wheel!—

And yet, when I bethink myself again,

I wonder you should loathe the instrument!

For look at me!—I breathe as free as ever;

My arms are folded o'er a heart at ease;

Its wonted hue, methinks, invests my cheek,

And I am sitting on the very block,
Yet never lifted axe to lop a head!—
Come!—take your seat, Almagro!

Alma. What do you mean?

Alas. I'll tell you, answer me a word or two!
Did I not trust you?—did I not love you?—both
With the simplicity of a very boy?
You know I did.—If not, why, say so.—Well?

Alma. I do not say so.

Alas. No?—so far, so well.

Alma. What do you purpose?—Wherefore bring me hither?

Alas. I haven't done yet!—Was't not my pride, Almagro,
To build you up in men's esteem above
Myself?—Whene'er they gave Alasco credit
For this or that desert,—did he not mount
Your merits on his own? If he did not,
Deny it.

Alma. Nay, I don't deny it.

Alas. Well,
Again!

Alma. Alasco, this is freezing work!

Alas. Not so, Almagro,—all the frost's to come!
You were a man of doubtful rank, Almagro—
I mean in men's esteem—when first I knew you;
Among our comrades, some would rate you low,
Some high, though doubtingly; none very high!
I raised you to the top, and kept you there;
Yea, when the people's choice between us lay
In even balance; 'gainst myself, I gave
The casting vote, at once, that made you Regent!
Now, to the credit side—my debts to you!
They are few, but large, Almagro!—Foremost, then,
A sister's sacredness profaned!—That trespass,
Had I learn'd it, then, from all the rest had saved thee—
Tell me how a man a modest woman treats,
And I'll tell you what kind of man he is!
In the next place—my credit undermined—
You know who Cortez is?—and with the smile,
As of a friend, that play'd fast and loose,
My freedom jeopardized—perhaps my life!—
And last of all—ay,—look upon the rack!—
You might as well have laid an infant on it,
You would as soon!—I believe it!—last of all,
My father, like a sound leaf withering,
Which if allow'd to hang its little time,
Falls with a breath that hardly stirs the spray,
Thou wouldst not suffer dreamingly to die,
But brought'st, with heart to ruth impenetrable,
As flint to dew, to an untimely end,
Forestalling sleep with torture!

Alma. You forget!

Your father hated me—What progeny,

Except the serpent, should the serpent have?
You thwarted me!—Who would not push aside
The let that stood 'twixt his soul's wish and him?
Your sister drove me mad with love, and spurn'd me!

Alas. You never knew what love was !—Love !—What ! love
A virtuous maiden, and, with no inclining
On her part towards thee, dare to violate
Even the gauze that veils her modest face ?
He ne'er knew love—can never know—who knows not
Woman, unlaps'd is, next to Heav'n, most sacred !
Say that the man, who would profane her, loves her !
And if he does, brutes love as much as he !
You ne'er went mad with anything so holy !

Alma. Why have you brought me to this place?

Alas. To die!

That thou shouldst bring me to the pass, Almagro,
That makes me tell thee this!—me!—thy Alasco!
Thine even more, in cherishing, than ever
He was his own; whose brain, heart, body, limbs,
At any time sooner than for himself,
He had laid down for thee!—When a gaunt bear
Rush'd from a thicket towards thee, once, who lay,
Ere thou couldst wink, struggling upon the ground
"Twixt thee and him?—calling to thee to fly,
So all forgetful was he of himself,
Although entangled in the deadly hug
Of the fell monster? With my forest-knife
I saved this arm its blood,—so saving thee—
This arm, now nerved to kill thee!—[Drawing.]—How can
this be?

How has it come to pass?—Whence this blank wreck
Of love, so stanchly built, I could have sworn
The storm blew never yet could break it up!
Tell me!—for I am wild with wondering!

Alma. I wonder too, but am not wild withal,
That thou shouldst wish to take thyself the life
Thou knowest to be forfeited.

Alas. Why, who

So fit to be thy executioner?—
To fill the office whose revolting nature
Flesh creeps at so, its functionary sickens,
With loathing, those who only look upon him?—

Who, for an office so unnatural,

So fit, as such a trespasser 'gainst nature
As I am?—to a stranger to my blood

Who gave that trust, which to the source of it

I owed, but would not give!—Except for me.

Thou ne'er hadst laid my father on the rack ;

'Twas I who gave thee power o'er his grey hairs,

I was his murderer as well as thou.

Of felons men make executioners !

Alma. My blood be on thy soul, so shedd'st thou it!

Alas. Almagro, I *will* shed it!—thou must bleed,
 And by this hand; but I will use this hand
 As it becomes a soldier and a man!—
 Here is another sword!—This brave revenge
Breathed I the wish to take, I were prevented!
 The meanest hind in Arragon would flout
 The thought of honourable chastisement
 To one so fallen as thou art,—but I hold it
 A debt due to a father by his son,
 And mean to pay it in full!—No further parley!
 What is infirm in thee—as well I know,
 But must not now cast thought to—overlook!
 Come, guard thy life!—strike manfully at mine!
 'Tis the last time its bane may prove thy safeguard!

Alma. Hold yet a moment!—thou wouldst give me, *SETE*,
 Fair play! Thy weapon is the longer one!—

Alas. Measure it!—There!

[*Gives his sword to ALMAGRO, who throws it away.*]

Alma. Lo! thou who, now, so freely,
 Wouldst shed Almagro's blood, and, boastingly,
 Wouldst make a merit on't; look to thine own!
 Not by Alasco's honourable sword,
 Nor by the scaffold, shall Almagro die!
 Such means am I provided with as scoff
 At aught the executioner, or thou
 Canst perpetrate against me. Mark, Alasco!
 Almagro dies, but thou shalt die before him;
 For in thy weakness, which I ever loath'd,
 I see the bane that to this close has brought
 My dearest hopes and me! Yet, ere I use
 The vantage which thy trustfulness—I thank it
 For the last time—has given me, it is fit
 Thou know the full extent of what thou owest me.
 Thou thought'st thy debt on the score of old Ruphino
 Was large enough; but what will be thy wonder
 When I shall tell thee thou mayst add to that
 Another larger yet? Know then, Alasco—
 Soon as the tide of fortune 'gan to ebb,
 Sudden as it set in, and 'gainst the chance
 Of aught which thou, and those in league with thee,
 Could practise 'gainst me, I secured myself;—
 By my contrivance did thy sister's dagger
 Drink her own blood!

Alas. Now let thy sword drink mine!
 I will not swerve to avoid thee!—lift my arm
 To hinder thee!—move so much as a finger!
 I am a man the earth must loathe to bear!
 All who live on't must loathe! who loathes himself!

Alma. Loathe, as thou mayst, thyself, I loathe thee more.
 An end to words, save such as deeds can speak.

[*As ALMAGRO is on the point of rushing upon ALASCO,*
OMER discovers himself, and confronts him.]

Omer. An end to deeds of thine! Alasco lives—
 Ruphino lives!—Olivia lives!—None dies
 Except the Moor, and he but dies in name;
 Dies, that the Prince—Alasco's brother, and
 Ruphino's son—may live the husband of
 Olivia! See! Wake from thy dreams of guilt,
 Rouse thee!—and die.

[*PEDRO enters, conducting VELASQUEZ, followed by
 RUPHINO, OLIVIA, the KING, &c.—ALMAGRO drops
 his sword.*

Alas. My father!—sister!—Is it reality?

Olivia. It is, Alasco! Thanks to the gracious prince,
 Whose love for me transform'd him, thus, and brought
 To Saragossa, where he counted on
 Concealment from a friend—my tongue refuses
 To rate him less—who, though of calling harsh,
 He knew to be of kindly heart and true.

Alas. [*To the PRINCE.*] What shall I say to thee?

Prince. Call me thy brother!

King. As hence, thy sister I shall call my child!

Alma. [*Aside.*] Destroy'd by those I deem'd my instruments!
 Frustrated in revenge, in love, and hate!
 What fair set-off 'gainst such discomfiture?
 The gibbet cheated, or the block, or wheel!
 Could we cheat Heaven!—No circumventing there!
 What's this I see?—Instead of the huge World,
 A film; and what before was shadowy,
 The World to come, condensing into vast
 Enormous substance, insupportable
 To thought! The drug asserts its potency!
 This is the death-sweat that bedews my palms,
 My forehead and my lip, and like a cold
 And slimy serpent, coiling round my frame,
 With its loathed folds, my very marrow chills.

King. What man is he, that yonder stands and lives,
 Yet seems in mortal agony?

Alas. Almagro.

King. What!—he?—then has he look'd upon the sun
 For the last time!—The rack shall deal with him.
 No death-bed half so fit. Let's leave him to it.

[*Going.*

Alas. Oh no, my liege!

King. Thou wouldst not plead for him!
 Up! up! thy knee rebels, young man, to bend
 'Gainst nature!—justice!—Earth and Heaven, themselves,
 To supplicate for him whom they condemn!
 Against thy father's life thou makest suit,
 Against thy sister's honour—not to name
 The wrong he meditated 'gainst thyself!
 Forbear, young man. Why hang you thus your head,
 And still the posture keep that casts it down?
 What would you ask for?

Alas. Time for penitence.

A month! Well, then, a week! If not a week,
 A day! Between the attempt, sir, and the act
 There is a difference; so should there be
 Between the pains with which we visit them.
 The crimes he dies for were not perpetrated;
 No victim calls for retribution.
 Spare him!—spare him! We were boys together.
 Howe'er it changes with us on life's road,
 The sunny start all intervals breaks through,
 And warms us with the olden mood again!
 The hearty laugh of youth is in mine ear,
 And there stands he, who shared it with me; now
 A woful bankrupt; while the rich possessions
 I counted lost, are all my own again.
 I can't forbear. Say that I hold my tongue,
 My eyes will speak; you see they do without;
 And for the playmate's sake implore thee spare
 The man, although a weak and guilty one!

King. Against my judgment does my heart give way,
 Corrupted by your tears. His life is yours:
 Do with it what you list!

Alas. It shall be spared.
 An exile shall he live to die in penitence!
 Almagro!

Pedro. Hush! He dies by poison, sir!
 I know the signs. He makes a sudden end!
 His spirit's gone—it fled with that groan!

Alas. The pardon you permitted, Heav'n denies him!
 Its justice and its mercy are its own!

END OF THE ROSE OF ARRAGON.

THE SECRETARY:

A Play,

IN FIVE ACTS.

TO JOHN FORSTER, ESQ.,

IN

GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF MANY ACTS OF KINDNESS RENDERED

TO THE AUTHOR,

IN

THE COURSE OF HIS DRAMATIC CAREER,

This Play

IS DEDICATED.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

<i>The King</i>	Mr. RYDER.
<i>Duke of Gaveston</i>	Mr. G. BENNETT.
<i>Lord Sherbrooke</i>	Mr. HUDSON.
<i>Lord Byerdale</i>	Mr. PHELPS.
<i>Lord Sunbury</i>	Mr. WALDRON.
<i>Sir George Barkley</i>	Mr. GRAHAM.
<i>Sir Richard Fenwick</i>	Mr. LYNNE.
<i>Sir John Friend</i>	Mr. MELLON.
<i>Sir William Parkyn</i>	Mr. ROBERTS.
<i>Colonel Green</i>	Mr. MACREADY.
<i>Wilton</i>	Mr. ANDERSON.
<i>Harrison</i>	Mr. LAMBERT.
<i>Charnock</i>	Mr. C. J. SMITH.
<i>Armstrong</i>	Mr. SELBY.
<i>Williams</i>	Mr. YARNOLD.
<i>Page</i>	Mr. STANTON.
<i>Lady Laura Gaveston</i>	Miss HELEN FAUCIT.
<i>Emmeline</i>	Mrs. WIGAN.

Conspirators, &c. &c.

THE SECRETARY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—LORD BYERDALE'S *Study*.—WILTON seated at a table in the act of writing.—Several folded letters before him, other letters lying open, papers, &c.

Wilt. That memory should feed itself!—wax stronger
In its impression, without agency
Of that which wrought it; till the simulation—
For e'en so much it is—grows palpable
As the original—holds commune with
Our ears and eyes, yet all's within ourself!
At first her image was a dreamy thing
That came and went, and might, for aught I deem'd.
Have gone for ever—now 'tis ever with me!
Substantial presence! steadfast constancy!
I write, I read, I talk, and breaking off
In listless absence, to myself return
In company with her! She is my theme
That supersedes all others! Why is this?
What do I nourish? Hope in spite of hope!
Madness of wishes—never to be bless'd!
Her groom is not beneath her more than I,
The secretary of a haughty lord!
His clerk!—that in his counsels holds no share
More than his pen! What better should I be?—
A man who claims no core of kith or kin
In the wide world! I had a friend—a good
And gracious one—who foster'd me, to play
A higher part. Compell'd by urgent cause
To travel, to this lord he left the care
Of my advancement—left, as to a friend!
But friends at second-hand are doubtful ones!
Where will it end?—O perfect imaging
Of sweetness!—grace!—aspect of soul and form
Most rich in all that man desires in woman!
Rare excellence!—Why, where am I again?
Along with her! Gazing upon her—rapt
With marvel at the glory of her presence!

[LORD BYERDALE enters.—Stops short, and stands observing WILTON'S abstraction.—Advances and addresses him impatiently.]

Lord By. So! Are those letters finished?

Wilt. But the seals
And superscriptions.

Lord By. Get them out of hand!
He grows abstracted. Lady Laura's tone
Had matter in it when she ask'd for him.
Why minds he me of her? She values much,
I hear, the service which he render'd her.
A man of prowess is my secretary,
And presence too! 'Tis not of her he thinks?
Think of an empress!—Does she think of him?
A lady with a will, as I am told!
A judge of merits!—does not take a year
To tell her mind!—That children should have minds!
Be she not of the mind to wed my son,
When he shall sue her—which he shall to-day—
Look to't his Grace of Gaveston! He must plot!
He would reseat the Stuart!—Would he so?
Eyes are upon his Grace he wots not of!
She ask'd for Wilton—never named my son!
The very man, indeed, he is wherewith
Romancists matches disproportionate
Contract—wed pages with their mistresses!
Would my Lord Sunbury had kept at home,
Not palm'd on me his seemly *protégé*!
He roams to France, and finds a prison there!
There's something in his presence troubles me.
So sat my brother when he play'd the clerk,
With sword on thigh, rather than pen in hand;
You saw the soldier, whatsoe'er he did!
Is it his son? I shall be soon resolved!
My trusty messenger returns to-day.

Wilt. [*Rising.*] My lord, they are ready.

Lord By. Go and post them, sir,
With your own hand. Tarry, sir; you will pass
His Grace of Gaveston's house; and should you call—

Wilt. Call *there*, my lord?

Lord By. Yes; you *do* call there?

Wilt. No.

Lord By. You have been there?

Wilt. No, my lord.

Lord By. Go, post the letters! [*WILTON goes out.*]
How far above his errand is his gait!
I could believe my brother living still,
And striding forth the door!—*He goes not there.*
'Tis well he's modest! Will there come the day
When I shall see him knocking at the gate
As though he were at home? Would he were hence!
Why did I ever see him? Ha! Who's come?

[*To WILLIAMS, who enters.*]
Will. My lord, your messenger to Ireland sent.

Lord By. Admit him. Fear or hope is now at end.
Welcome! What bring you? [*To HARRISON, who enters.*]

Har. [*Giving papers.*] For your lordship these.

Lord By. [*To HARRISON, who goes out.*] Go, get refresh'd!

[*Reads.*] "They never reach'd the ship!—"

"Landed again ten miles below the creek!"

They told me false then. Gold finds out the truth!

So both survived! But Leonard now is dead,

And for the nephew—thanks to self-will'd love—

He breathes without his name! What fear I, then?

What though he be my eldest brother's son! [*Goes out.*]

SCENE II.—Hyde Park.

Enter COLONEL GREEN and WILTON.

Wilt. Sir, I would walk alone—Men may take leave
To choose their own acquaintance! Frankly, you
Are hardly to my taste—What are you, sir?

Green. What am I?—Why the man that wears this suit,
That owns this trunk, these thews, these features!—Well!

Are you content?—or would you learn my name

And family? Beware, sir! Tell your own.

Wilt. I cannot!

Green. You are right!—To say "No more
"Can I," were flippantly to answer you;
Still, as I yet have held it wisdom, when
With wit or truth we must part company,
To let the lighter go, I claim the knowledge
Which you confess to lack.

Wilt. You know my name
And family?

Green. I know my own.

Wilt. Not mine!

Green. What then? Is't matter for despondency?

Wilt. The man that toils along a weary road
Beneath a burthen, and, miscounting, thinks
The time is come, at last, to lay it down,
With weight augmented takes it up again
To bear it onward still.

Green. You are not yet
Of age.

Wilt. How know you that?

Green. What matter how,
So that I know? The knowledge on't is neither
Murder nor theft! It might be treason—but
It is not that. What friend have you beside
The Earl of Sunbury?

Wilt. How know you he's
My friend?

Green. Why ply a bootless labour twice?
I know it. That content you!—Who besides
Rank in the list, more, often, fill than ought?

Wilt. I count but one—Lord Sherbrooke.

Green. Son of him

You're secretary to—Lord Byerdale.

Wilt. You seem to know me well!

Green. I seem? I do!

Lord Byerdale!—is he your friend too?

Wilt. No.

Green. Nor friend to any who deserve a friend!

Wilt. Who are you, sir?

Green. You have been bred at college.

You have won honours there—and high ones, too.

A college is a place to sharpen wit,

Or ought to be. A slight hint should suffice;

And yet, it seems, you cannot take a broad one.

Wilt. Sir, I love openness and honour.

Green. Right!

And so do I. I mean you not to know me!

So much for openness!—and, as to honour,

Judge me as you find me!

Wilt. Thereby judging you,

How shall I rate you in the property

In question last; when, calmly looking on,

You suffer'd lawless violence to leaguer

A noble lady and her sire, nor stirr'd

A finger to their rescue?

Green. Motives, sir,

Give shape to facts, which often change them.

To things the most diverse from what they seem.

Thus far know mine—I weigh'd the risk, was run,

And framed my conduct to the amount of it.

A score of crowns to needy gentlemen

Was worth, perhaps, the violence they did

Their better natures, so to practise on

A lady's fright. In these disjointed times,

Try as you may, things will not go by rule!

William of Nassau fills the throne to-day—

Wilt. [Interrupting him.] Long may he fill it, sir, and hand
it down

An heir-loom with a people's guarantee

To an unfailing race!

Green. [Vehemently.] Youth, 'twas not thus!—

[Checks himself.

But those who left you in your infancy,

To take the course which others counted best,

Have but themselves to thank! I'll not be one

To check the faith, that, now, must bear thee through!

Wilt. You are a man of honour.

Green. By my foes

I have been counted so. Where left we off?

Where it were best we leave the argument.

Wilt. One word, sir, to go back.

Green. Say on!

Wilt. From what
You said just now, I think I must have friends
I know not of—

Green. You have.

Wilt. Who are they?

Green. Yet
You may not know.

Wilt. But shall I ever know?

Green. As sure as life holds on with them and you!
Now to the cause that makes you jealous of me—

My passive bearing at a certain time.

Your arm achieved what mine forbore to do—

Mark me!—forbore!—rescued the noble sire

And yet more noble child.

Wilt. More noble?

Green. Yes;

Better! You have seen them?

Wilt. No.

Green. You would be welcome.

Hast thought upon the maid?—I see thou hast.

Wilt. Sir!

Green. Are you vapour? Do I see you now,

And now are you away?

Wilt. What mean you, sir?

Green. A minute since I was a man of honour!

Wilt. You are so still.

Green. And such shall be approved.

So trust you me!—Hast thought upon the maid?

Wilt. I have!

Green. 'Twas fit!—'Twas fair!—'Twas paying back!

What you received—for she has thought of you!

Mark!—At the moment that you stood her friend,

She grew your love!—Youth's in a blaze, and sees

Not half what passes round it!—When to flight

You put her enemies, you little thought

That, after all your pains, the maid was robb'd!

Wilt. Robb'd!

Green. Of her heart—I saw it on the arm

Where but her figure seem'd to hang, the while

You led her to the carriage.

Wilt. Do you know

Who was the lady?

Green. Daughter to the Duke

Of Gaveston.

Wilt. Yes; and I an humble man!

Green. You are not an humble man—that is—I am right!—

And stand to what I say—a man that owns

A noble soul is not an humble man.

In the poor sense wherein the sapient world

Mouths out the trite and questionable phrase!

Wilt. Who are you, sir?—Forgive me!—I'm content

To know you by your thoughts.

Green. Whereto I'll add
 My deeds in time, with every adjunct else!
 Hie to the Duke's! He owes thee benefit;
 And welcome will he give thee as a friend,
 Though dull to what's to come, as dawn to day
 When the sun's up and glow is turn'd to fire!
 His daughter pines for sight of him again,
 Whom the first sight commended so, all else
 To vision is a blank! I say again
 Thou art no humble man! Revolve my words
 With boldest spirit.—Dare, and you shall win!
 My counsel needing, or my help, this scrawl
 Will prove your guide, although a homely one.
 'Tire never yet was flesh and blood, no more
 Than mind and heart! The man is still the man! [*Goes out.*]

Will. As fanning wind will bring to blaze again
 The fire we thought was out, but only smoulder'd;
 So, at his word, my only smother'd hopes
 Revive, when, doting, I believed them dead.
 Here Sherbrooke comes—indeed my hearty friend,
 But, for my humour, all too light a one.

Enter SHERBROOKE.

Sher. So, Master Secretary, health to you!
 If health you wish—for he's a fool who serves
 A man against his humour—the right road
 To make an enemy! Each man has his bliss
 According to his nature. One will mope;
 A squadron could not drag him to a feast!
 Leave him, good soul, alone, with knees to chin,
 Feet on the fender, sitting all a-heap
 Over the embers winking in the grate!
 He's happy!—With the spleen another man
 Is smother'd—champions it as cavalier
 His lady-love! "Have at you, sir!" would you come
 Betwixt him and his humour. Do you see
 That scowl?—It is his mistress' favour which
 He wears with thin and bitter curling lip,
 All the year round, spite of the laughing sun.
 And why not, sir? He is a happy man!—
 As happy as he can be!—Let him be!
 And there are men, saving your reverence,
 Who, with the thorax sound as a new drum,
 Waste with the melting rheum—would you believe them?
 With trunks like culverins, and limbs of brawn,
 They shake with rigors at a thorough air!
 No month but brings its proper malady,
 Of which they're sure to die!—yet do they live,
 And sleep, and wake, and talk, and eat, and drink,
 Until perhaps some nostrum makes an end!—
 Yet are they happy, sir, in their own way.

Will. These are anomalies 'mongst men.

Sher. Not so:

The world's made up of such! Few wisely live.

The wise man, sir, is the anomaly!

Wilt. You're in the mood contemplative to-day.

Sher. I am—I am about to seek a wife.

Why do you start?—I do not say to *take* one.

Wilt. About to wed?

Sher. My father wills it so.

But fathers do not settle marriage brawls:

A pity, then, they settle marriages.

Better their children. Men complain the less,

When, for their cares, they have themselves to thank.

Wilt. And may I know the lady?

Sher. You have met her.

Wilt. Met her!—

Sher. Let's see. *The time was evening. 'Twas*

A lone sequester'd spot.—Couldn't I write

A deep romance?—A fear-bewilder'd sire

And shrieking damsel, by a lawless band

Beset.—A situation!—Who comes in?

The hero of my story—or the book

Is matter for the fire! *So in he comes!*

Alone? Of course alone—most hero-like!

One against five!—Twenty were few as five,—

No hero ever takes account of odds!

Is he o'erpower'd? Not if the scribe has thews.

His blows fell two; his eyes flash down the rest;

Beauty and Age—weak guardian of such store—

Are rescued in the very nick of time!

Fraud its inglorious field inglorious flies,

And Age is free to hobble. Not so Beauty;

For Beauty's soft of heart and frail of limb,

And like to swoon in an extremity;

Which if the author sees not, he hath got

A cataract, and couch his eyes for him

With his own pen!—I am not such a one.

When I attempt a book, I write a book!

The lady needs support,—who yields it her?

The hero 'fore the king, were the king by!

Upon the hero leans the heroine!

At first half-willingly—more willingly

Anon,—anon with all her heart and soul,—

And so, and so, and so, is borne away!

You'll read my work and give it a good name?

Why, what's the matter, man? You're dumb and pale.

Heavens! if the first step overpowers you so,

How will you mount my climax as it towers?

Wilton!

Wilt. My lord?

Sher. My friend!—I brook not lord!

Or call me "Sherbrooke"—that's the friendly mode.

What gaze you at in vacancy? A phantom?

Wilton, it is a phantom that you see.
If aught that gives you pain—I would not wed
The Lady Laura Gaveston!

Wilt. What is she
To me?

Sher. Nothing—if not the self-same thing
You are to her!—Wilton, she has lost her heart,
And you have got it.

Wilt. Sherbrooke—

Sher. That's the word!

Shake hands, man! Listen! At the play last night
I sat with her. She spoke a library,
If "yea" and "nay" make volumes. Only once
The scene attracted her. *The heroine*
Was rescued by her lover. Had you heard
The sighs with which she follow'd, step by step,
The progress of the touching incident!—
My book shall beat it, though!—If you feel, speak!
Or is it that you feel too much to speak?
Do you note me, Wilton? All the rest of the time
Her eyes kept traversing the tiers, as though
In quest of one they sought but could not find;
For ne'er they fix'd, save when there oped a door,
And then they turn'd away to range again!
The wish'd one came not in!—a circumstance
Of tender implication to dilate on.
I'll turn it to account!—My book is writ!—
And at the close, when on the vestibule
We hung awhile to wait her hinder'd coach,
Jove! how she scann'd the beaux!—Some management
To make that pass with prudes, who read aloud—
And when the steps at last gave note to mount,
How with a sigh she went all listless in,
Scarce giving me Good night!

Wilt. How know you whom
She look'd for—if she look'd for any one?

Sher. By this and this. First, her absorption at
That critical and memory-stirring scene,
The counterpart of one which you and she
Enacted once with marvellous effect—
Methinks a document!—In the next place,
The potency of certain words as plain
As "Wilton Brown" no kin at all to famed
Abracadabra!—to enchain her ear
And make the blood with ebb and flow enact
The tide upon the haven of her cheek,
And hold her lips parted like to those
Who stint their breath with thrilling of a tale;
As with her father I discuss'd a point
Touching the argument, whereon I mean
To take my stand 'mongst literary men!—
And, add to this, as proof superlative,

Her tongue is never weary of your name,
Which, once 'tis broach'd, she more and more repeats,
Like strain that grows on us the more 'tis sung!

Wilton, the Lady Laura loves you, man!

Wilt. Sherbrooke, remember I'm an humble man!

Sher. You are not an humble man!

Wilt. Again! How's this?

I am bewild'rd—

Sher. Love is not a plain,

But an entangling maze.

Wilt. I do not speak

Of love! You say I am no humble man?

Sher. And say't again.

Wilt. Your father's secretary!

Sher. And what am I that am my father's son?

Intrinsically humbler far than you.

Wilton, think boldly of yourself!

Wilt. Again!

Look here—As now you speak, so spoke the man

Who gave me this.

[*Showing a paper.*]

Sher. Let's see it!—"Colonel Green—

"At the Green Dragon"—challenge for St. George!

And you, an humble man!

Wilt. What man is he

Who gave me that?

Sher. [*Returning the paper.*] An honourable one;

Albeit he draws not sword when he beholds

A lady leagur'd on the king's highway.

Wilt. Is he of the craft?

Sher. There, breathe at ease, my friend,

He is not. Wilton, sound men drive that trade.

Don't wonder!—When a kingdom's upside down,

What man can say he is to-day himself

As he was yesterday? The battle's chance

Brings change of pockets—light for heavy ones;

Lank purses; or, for old ones, but their room;

New masters to old mansions, and so forth!—

I do not justify, I but excuse.

There is at times a conscience in offence,

For which the best abate the penalty.

But to my Dulcinea and her knight!

My father wills I go and woo the fair.

I go and woo, but you must come and win!

Wilt. What! Go along with you? No!—not a step,

When Honour forbids me, not!

Sher. Forbid the prude

To waste her breath until she sees the strait.

Wilt. To 'scape the strait 'twere best to shun it.

Sher. So,

The navigator never had gone through!

Wilton, you'll helm it, spite of shoal and rock,

And laugh beyond in the bright open sea!

I'll have you come with me!—Nay, scowl away!
 What! jealousy!—nip friendship, will you?—but
 You shall not, by this honest arm and hand!
 Come on!

Wilt. Nay, Sherbrooke—

Sher. Nay, come on!—Come on!

[*Goes out, forcing WILTON with him.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Chamber in the Duke of GAVESTON's house.*

Enter the DUKE.

Duke. How changed my daughter is!—I know her not
 Since our adventure on the king's highway.
 Or love has turn'd her wits for her, or fright.
 The staid recluse of yesterday, to-day
 Is lady of the crowd! She now frequents
 Assemblies—plays—all haunts of throng'd resort.
 What draws her forth so much? I can't surmise!
 But from herself the knowledge of the cause
 Of such a metamorphosis can come.
 For quiet, restlessness!—from books to sights!
 I'll tax her home upon it. She's obedient;
 Yet, once her purpose fix'd, is hard to move.
 Suitor she never brook'd!—Men's merits, still
 Has thought, should ever 'bove their stations mount.
 I had a fear—but no!—But once they met—
 The heart forgets, when cease the eyes to prompt.
 See where she thoughtful moves with eyes on ground!
 Another time—when she's in lighter mood.
 Her heart, upon its guard, might foil me now. [Goes out.]

Enter LADY LAURA.

Lady Lau. Where does he hide, while gallants, not his tithe
 In manly bearing, beauty, and desert,
 Vie for the lead, and with comparisons
 Set all the world at odds?—Let him appear
 Among them, all will shrink, at once, to one!
 The world will be one eye, one ear, one tongue,
 Awarding him the palm, past all compare!
 Or would it slight his merits for his rank?
 What of his rank?—Is't his disparagement
 That Fortune's blind?—Let Fortune take the blame—
 Or rather men, who laud, where she prefers,
 Even while they know she sees not what she does!
 Why, let them like idolaters bow down
 Before the works of their own hands!—Love bends

At Heaven's command alone—informing Love!
 Honest and clear of sight, whose piercing eye
 Vies with the lapidary's—knows the gem,
 Whate'er the setting! Strange that I, a maid,
 Who held her single state so sovereignly,
 No suitor ever twice drew near to woo,
 Should now regard it as a barren sway,
 Dominion of some far and desert isle,
 Which he who owns it gladly would exchange
 For slavery in some blest continent!
 Love, if I slighted thee, thou'rt well revenged;
 I'm all thy subject now; but for my gains
 Have nought, except my servitude, to boast;
 Denied exchange of speech or sight with him
 Who made me doff defiance of thy rule!

Enter EMMELINE.

Emme. Lord Sherbrooke, madam, and a friend—

Lady Lau. A friend?

What! has his friend no name?—No lofty one,
 Or he'd be sure to give it!—Show him in.
 Stay! Do you know the gentleman that comes
 Along with him?

Emme. Not, as I think, my lady.

His back was towards me, but I dare be sworn
 He has a noble presence.

Lady Lau. To be sure!

He comes in noble company. The sun
 Makes vapours that are near him turn to gold!
 Go!—[EMMELINE goes out.] I am sick of you and all the
 world!—

And all the world!—I would the jest were o'er!
 The poor—poor jest, that so misplaces things,
 We know not what we look at! Everywhere,
 Except in human nature, qualities
 Determine uses. No one sets to build
 A garden-wall to train a sloe or crab,
 Or rears a thistle in a hothouse bed!
 Well, well! if essences, in other things,
 Keep rule, 'tis fit perhaps they jumble men.
 I'm sick of life! 'Tis one against the million,
 So let the million have its way!—It will!
 Lord weds with lady.—Why?—Because a lord!
 A common match would find a better reason!
 Yet no; 'tis rank all through—nothing but rank!
 Craft weds with craft—profession with profession
 Weddings for clothes! From top to bottom all's
 At odds with reason! Human life is ravell'd,
 And love itself can't make the thread run clear.
 The work that only frets 'twere best give o'er;
 Only don't help to make the puzzle worse!
 Let the world be! It is too old to mend;

What 'tis, it was, and will be to the end!

[EMMELINE enters, conducting WILTON and SHERBROOKE, and retires.

Sher. Madam, I take leave to present myself,
And, with myself, my friend.

Lady Lau. Your friend and you,
My lord, are welcome in all courtesy.

Sher. [Aside to WILTON.] A welcome for a lover! Mark
you that?

An answer, too, before the question's put!
She never raised her eyes—That's hope! They say
A maid in love still goes with downcast looks.
But she may lock her vision in her heart;
And, if she does, I'll stake my coronet
You're there along with it.

Wilt. [Uneasily.] Accost her, Sherbrooke!

Sher. And if I do, what shall I say to her?
That 'tis a fair day?—that 'tis very warm?
Or very cool?—Or that I hope she's well,
And hope his Grace, her father, is the same?
That the new fashions are come out, and belles,
To please their beaux, now meet them with sour looks?
That beaux, to wive, come wooing for their friends?
That, nowadays, things find their proper way
By going contrary?—a paradox!
Or that the world is in its childhood yet,
And hopes to come to manhood—if it lives?
Or what? Come, Wilton, you take up the word,
And help a man that can't get through his task!
Speak to her, Wilton—Wish her a good morning!
Say anything to her.

Lady Lau. A fine day, my lord!
The tables turn when ladies must speak first.

Sher. Madam, the day is very fine indeed; [Aside.
At least, I think so. But what thinks my friend?—
For he is a philosopher, and knows
Fine weather is the kind that's wanted most.

A calm is fine—the sailor wants a breeze;
Sunshine is fine—the farmer wants a cloud:
One looks for frost, another looks for snow,
Another looks for rain—though none for sleet!
Thus, uses make the excellence of things;
At least, I think so, madam. What thinks Wilton?

Lady Lau. Wilton!

Wilt. Nay, Sherbrooke.

Sher. I will have you speak!
Madam, my friend is very weatherwise.
You call it a fine day, and so do I;
But come, what think you, Wilton?

Lady Lau. It is he!

Oh, sir, I'm glad to see you!—very glad!
Though somewhat too confused to show it you.

Because—because—I saw you not at once—
 And—find you standing—and his lordship too—
 Pray you excuse a moping, absent girl,
 And let her make amends—and—Pray take chairs!

Sher. [*Aside to WILTON.*] I might have dropp'd, you see, if
 not for you.

Now will I court her to your very face!

Fair Lady Laura Gaveston!

Lady Lau. [*Coldly.*] Well, my lord?

Sher. My friend suspects the weather.

Wilt. [*Aside to SHERBROOKE.*] Nay!

Sher. You do.

He thinks, though now so fine, there's chance of hail;

For it is April, as you know—a month

When here will be a shower, and sunshine there;

So one goes dry, another dripping wet.

The sky's a puzzle; but there are stranger things!

You know my errand, Lady Laura; still

I tell it you to show I know it too;

And, for your answer, *that*, I well foresee!

But would not balk your bright lips of their right;

To speak, themselves, the will of her they serve.

My father hither sends his hopeful son—

Although in hopeless mood—to seek a wife.

I say, *in hopeless mood*; for bonds, you know,

Although they be of silk, are things that bind;

And, to be plain, I love my liberty!

I'll make but a poor husband at the best;

But, if you will, I'll make the best I can.

I court you, lady, for my father's sake,

In the first place—a son can say no less;

In the next place, I court you for your own:

A lover, I presume, can say no more.

Now, as I know brief wooing prospers best,

One way or t'other bringing to an end

What else had cost much time, were better saved;

My courtship, promptly, as you see, begun,

I bring as promptly to a graceful close.

But as 'tis fit my merits you should know—

The proper ground of failure or success—

And as wise men speak little of themselves,

But trust, in these regards, to others' tongues;

The blanks which I have left—and not a few—

I leave my friend in kindness to fill up!

Wilton, I'll wait you in the ante-room.

Wilt. [*Rising.*] Sherbrooke—

Sher. [*Pushing him down again.*] Nay, take your seat again.

For shame!

What! Frighted of a lady's company?

Or, madam, is the gentleman to stay

At my request—or do you wish him gone?

Lady Lau. The gentleman will stay—at my request!

Sher. [*Aside to WILTON.*] Wilton, what think you of the weather now?

Madam, I dare be bound he'll do your will,
Though 'twere not back'd by mine—I take my leave;
And with the more content, because I know—
And here I speak the bare and steadfast truth—
I leave with you the man—I boast my friend. [*Goes out.*]

Lady Lau. Sir, you will deem me bold to wish you stay;
Yet, sooth, the blame is yours. When creditors
Are modest, and hold off, the debtor's shamed
That comes not forth—if not to pay his debt.
At least to grace it with acknowledgment!

Wilt. You owe me nothing, lady.

Lady Lau. Nothing!—No!—

And weighs my life, sir, nothing in your eyes?
Although perhaps a trifle in my own!

Wilt. Your life!—O, lady!—

Lady Lau. Well, sir?—Well?—Say on!
Is't nothing?—Yet my gratitude's a heap;
But that, perhaps, is nothing!

Wilt. Were't deserved,

So much—save one thing—I could wish no more!

Lady Lau. I will believe you; yet, could almost doubt;
For let me ask why what you valued so
You took no pains to learn, if render'd you?—
Don't speak!—I know!—desert that's true holds back!
Ere challenge its reward, would let it go!
Yet, in my own defence I must be frank,
And tell you I have wish'd to see you, sir;
Nor once, but oft; nor much, but earnestly,
To tell you all I feel I owe you, sir;
And still, though I defended you just now,
Charging your absence to the proper cause,
Yet must you bear some blame—for though you had
Your feelings, sir, we had our feelings too,
For which 'twere not unjust to credit us;
Which crediting, 'twere hardly generous
To grieve with needless pain!—our name—abode
My father gave you—so methinks did I.
They were not idly given, but for a purpose;
They were not coldly given, but heartily;
They meant an invitation—It is true
'Twas not accepted by your lips, and yet
I thought your looks gave token of as much.
If I thought wrong, I grieve for my mistake—
I would not think you never meant to come!

Wilt. 'Twas true!

Lady Lau. 'Twas strange!—To risk your life for us,
Yet grudge a step to see—that we were well.

Wilt. I heard that you were well—I knew you were.

Lady Lau. And that contented you. Sir, I have friends
I know are well; yet I would see them too.

But then, they are dear friends—you are very right.
 'Twere almost bold to say we are acquaintance;
 Yet, though you think me forward, I shall say
 We were not losers, did you rate us more.

Wilt. More?—O much more!—More than I dare to name!

Lady Lau. [*Aside.*] I could believe the wish that's in my breast

Is throbbing now in his—I am beloved!

Sir, you say nothing, or you say too much—

I mean too much for faith.—More than acquaintance—

Would be a friend—much more were—more than that—

O lips, be mute—when looks can talk so well!

The more his tongue refrains, the more he speaks!

Wilt. O, were I sure—

Lady Lau. Of what?

Wilt. That I could claim

A royal stock!

Lady Lau. What then?—Be frank!—What then?

Wilt. Why then I might to lady high as you

Proffer my heart.

Lady Lau. You then would condescend!

And, think you, none can condescend but you?

Wouldst like me—for a friend?

Wilt. No!

Lady Lau. No?

Wilt. A friend

Lies near the heart; but then there is the core,

That looks for something else.

Lady Lau. Which you have found!

No?

Wilt. Yes!

Lady Lau. A mistress?

Wilt. Yes!

Lady Lau. Where does she bide?

Wilt. Where does she bide! O Honour, is it right

To take advantage of the love for us

That would undo itself—descend for us

From state—make partnership with namelessness—

Convert high veneration into scorn—

Quit the bright pageant of emblazon'd life,

To play a poor part in the daily crowd?

Lady Lau. Nothing!—All nothing!

Wilt. Cast itself away—

Give all—gain naught—unless abasement's gain—

Naught but a heart, which any one could give?

Lady Lau. No!—only one—worth all that ever beat,

Cheap purchased with her own!

Wilt. [*Aside.*] O, generous maid!

And shall I take thy sterling gold for dress?

I must, or I must fly! Lady, farewell!

Lady Lau. Stay! You have stopp'd too long to go so soon!

Was there not something to be said? A word
About your friend? Well, sir; sit down and say it.

Wilt. My friend is noble.

Lady Lau. Ay! He is noble, is he?
Has he a heart?

Wilt. A brave, and warm one, too!

A man more modest than he loves to show.

Lady Lau. Sir, let him show the most he may, I'll find
The man will prove him very braggart there,—
A man to love whom is to boast one's self,
So is he lord of all true nobleness!
A man who rescued once a lady's life;
Who, for the chance of such salvation only,
Would risk that life again 'gainst twice the odds!
Why do you hang your head? Desert for shame!
Assert yourself, erect your brow, and cast
A thousand round you down, that only tower,
Because you please to droop! O doubtful pass
To come to!—for a maiden unenforced
To tell her love!—What can be urged for her?
What can she urge herself?—Why this, that Heaven
Inform'd her; so she knew its handiwork,
And worshipp'd Heaven in it!—Almost, and more
Than once, you've said you loved me, but stopp'd short!
I hold a virtue higher than a grace,
So prefer honesty to bashfulness—
As, by this time, perhaps, you more than guess:
Then, where you halted, will I e'en go on,
And tell you—yet why need I?—all is said
But the plain downright word, which, if I speak,
I shall not make you wise a tittle more;
Yet 'tis the word, and I will out with it—
You love me, Wilton, and 'tis love for love!
Why, Wilton, where's your heart?

Wilt. Here at your feet!

Lady Lau. Then 'tis a contract.

Wilt. Yes.

Lady Lau. How long to last?

Wilt. For life.

Lady Lau. No less a term!—Were't but a jot
Shorter than that, I'd have the compact torn
And scatter'd to the winds! For life?—

Wilt. For life!

[*The Duke of GAVESTON enters.*]

Lady Lau. Then, Wilton, I am yours. But mark me, yet;
My father cannot wed me 'gainst my will—
Against my father's will I'll never wed—
If I wed ever, Wilton, 'tis with you!

Duke. What means this, daughter?

Lady Lau. Did you overhear?

Duke. I did! For shame!

Lady Lau. Nay, father, say for shame
When I recall that, which you overheard!

What I'll repeat, nor pay, nor owe, a blush!
 You are a duke—I am your grace's child.
 We both are debtors to this gentleman
 Of both our lives!—You oft have mention'd him
 With gratitude—and, what you spoke, I felt,
 And call'd to mind the time when heroes wore
 The trophies that they won, though emperors';
 And wish'd—ay did I, from my heart's deep core—
 Such times were now for him! Up to him, father!
 Give him the generous hand. If fault there is,
 The penalty be mine—o'erleap the gap
 Rank sets between you—reverence the thing
 You owe your title to—whereby alone
 The ancestor that sent it down to you
 Won it!—Desert!—The stamp were, else, a brand!

Duke. I own myself your grateful debtor, sir,
 And what I owe you, sir, I would repay;
 And pray you take my hand as warranty,

Which, as I reckon'd you a man of honour,
 I think you know the proper limits of,
 And, knowing, will respect them.—Sir, your leave
 To hold some brief communion with my child,
 As what has pass'd behoves her to review!

Lady Lau. Wilton, 'twas all review'd before it pass'd.
 Father, I utter it with reverence
 To you!—It was no idle passing thought—

A seedling just appearing above ground,
 A foot could mock of growth and sweep away;
 But a deep, fibrous, and abounding root,
 Which, tearing up, you tear up all the ground,
 And that is—all my heart!—With this, farewell!
 What fruit the tree may bear but time can tell!

[*They go out severally.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—LORD BYERDALE'S Study.

Enter LORD SHERBROOKE and WILTON.

Sher. A maid of mettle, Wilton!—a warm heart,
 And honest too—too noble in her wish,
 To stint her tongue. She does not mew her love,
 As thus: *A well-deserving gentleman,*
She'd fain believe. Deny it, she would swear to't;
 She would!—*sufficient comely*—all the while
 She thinks him paragon. *A man, no doubt,*
A lady might affect!—while she is smit
 Beyond all doubt! *A very proper stature;*

What some would call a straight and well-shaped man !

Companion e'en for him of Belvidere !

One whom a maiden might for husband take !

When she has married him the hundredth time

That morning, conning o'er the ceremony,

And, louder than the clerk gives out the psalm,

Chanting *obey* !—A well-conducted maid !

Spring on her lips—a very backward Spring !

And in her heart Midsummer !—Out upon it !

The love, that knows 'tis justified, is wrong

To hang its head, and droop its lids and make

Its lips a jailer's porch that opes by halves,

In constant watch of whom it may let out—

Sure token that delinquents bide within !

'Tis even as I say. My eager sire

Has got his answer. She will none of me ;

Nor stops she there, but all the truth avows.

Her heart is pledged to you !—She will be wife

To none, but Wilton Brown.

Wilt. Declared she that ?

Sher. Yes ; soon as urged thereon,
From something stronger than a hint, the Duke
In converse with my father dropp'd.

Wilt. And gave

The Duke no promise to enforce your suit ?

Sher. My father's suit, you mean ! None, Wilton ; but

Excused himself on fair and valid grounds—

A pledge unto a dying mother given

Ne'er to coerce her child's affections.

Wilt. How

Brooks my good lord your father, the o'erturn

Of what he plann'd with so much care, and thought

Beyond mischance assured ?

Sher. I fear to speak,

When what I ought to speak lacks reverence,

And to a name revered ! Content thee, Wilton.

Bethink thee of a heart o'erfraught with hate,

Revenge, aught else in passion's murky list,

And guess how brooks my father his balk'd wish !

He will be here anon !—Look to the Duke !

You may befriend him, and I know you would,

Though now the let that keeps you from your hopes !

Spin volumes out of hints—and, Wilton, mind,

Inquires my father how I bear myself

On this reverse, you tell him I am sped—

Gone in the dumps—in doubt to hang or drown ;

That horrid things I mumble to myself,

Biting my nails—portent of direst things ;

That I am clean distraught, and measure rather

For a strait jacket than a coat and vest !

A man, in brief, whose wits are out o' sorts ;

And so it is !—for is it not enough

To drive one mad, when one's content, with frets
To try and make him more content? I hate
A man to fill my cup till it runs o'er!

Wilton, farewell!—Report me, if you love me,
Not what I am, but what I should be.—Mind,
Keep eye on the well-being of the Duke!

[Goes out.]

Wilt. There's danger toward the Duke. I do not blame
His slight of me!—Did I not slight myself?

Rebuke my love?—forbid my hopes to look
For entertainment at their master's hands?
Owe the Duke grudge? I bear ill-will to none;

My heart is all astonishment and love.

The Earl!—My task. [*Sits down.*] Look to the Duke? I'll
look

To my own honour—then is all assured!

Enter LORD BYERDALE.

Lord Byer. Yes, I shall crush him there, where he will
break—

Crumble to dust—in his pride! The match was made—

Conditions, quick as I propounded them,

Accorded! Nothing wanting but consent,

There where consent was duty! There!—upon

The very threshold of completion—there

We stop and all's undone! She shall accept,

In lieu of one who claims a noble stock,

A mate without a name!—a spurious graft,

For a fair scion!—for a boast, a blush!

And there he sits, at hand! His grace the Duke

Is, in a net of his own weaving, caught;

Complots with noted traitors, whose designs

We yet but guess at—to whose haunts, to-night

I'll have him dogg'd, and, thence as he returns,

Arrested and committed to the Tower.

Thus shall I strike one blow, but feather-light

To one that is to come. My instrument!

[Looking at WILTON.]

I have borne him hard! I loathe him for the blood

I more than guess he shares with me! Too near

He neighbours with the title and estates

My brothers' timely deaths without attain

Have handed down to me. Conjecture, busy

While yet a cast remains for chance to throw,

Conjures up visions full of claims to come,

On rights usurp'd, of which the wearer stripp'd,

Is left as beggar bare! Not trustfully

Men, wont to scowl, look sweet; yet show the wind,

That turns foul weather all at once to fair,

The wonder's gone. A reason will suffice.

Wilton, good morning!

Wilt. "Wilton!" When before

'Twas ever Mr. Brown!

Lord Byer. Wilton—

Wilt. Again!

Lord Byer. The soundest tree is still of slowest growth :
 Poplars shoot up to towers, while oaks are twigs.
 So loves and friendships vary just as trees ;
 The quickest form'd are scarce the most robust.
 I am not one who gives his heart away
 Upon a fit of liking. I take time ;
 Time is the test of truth. 'Tis many a day
 Since we knew one another—all which time
 I have thought much—felt much—but little said ;
 And e'en that little churlishly enough—
 Morosely, may be.—What, though, if I say
 It went against the grain ? It did so, Wilton.
 I oft have chid myself for slighting thee—
 Tax'd myself roundly—but my after-thought
 Has ta'en my part ; for who should nourish love
 While chance remains of sudden withering
 From some unknown, too late reveal'd defect ?
 Thus have I kept aloof, but with the aim
 To know the thing, I wish'd to draw more near,
 That, once embracing it, the lock might last !
 I know thee now, and henceforth we are friends !

Wilt. My lord !—

Lord Byer. Enough ! I guess what thou wouldst say ;
 I know thy modest nature. Be assured
 Thou canst not teach me, there ;—yet, it may be
 This seeming strange transition genders doubt.

Wilt. My lord !—

Lord Byer. I know you do not doubt me. Men,
 Single themselves, are always large of trust.
 I own I stand in need of some ; but you
 Can give, and have to spare. You are a free,
 A most deserving, more foregoing man.
 Have I not seen your patience ? Has it fail'd,
 And has it not been tried ? Ay, has it, Wilton !
 Ay, to my shame, I would say, knew I not
 My heart, and the fair end it had in view.
 The end, at times, transforms the means, that what
 We pass'd in hate, our love looks back upon !
 Wilton, you ought to rise !—You have the worth ;
 The palm should come, and shall !

Wilt. Alas !—

Lord Byer. I say
 I know your modesty—and modesty
 Is that rare quality men most applaud
 But nourish least, because 'tis not its art
 To enrich itself. The wealthy and the high
 Are the world's idols. Wilton, you must rise,
 And then, have modesty, or have it not,
 You will be hugg'd ! You have the merit, sir,
 But not the front ; and, better have the front

If you would make your way. There's not a week
In the year but mere Pretension plays and wins,
And Merit looking on, that knows the game,
But doubts to take the cards! Do I not know,
The very debts that men contract with you,
So far from claiming, you have ever shunn'd
The sight of those who owe them!

Wilt. Debts, my lord?

Lord Byer. Ay, debts!

Wilt. I know of none.

Lord Byer. Indeed! Why, then,
The Duke of Gaveston and his daughter do!
Moreover, as I learn, acknowledge them;
Farther, would render payment—*One*, at least.
I know the Lady Laura loves you, Wilton.

Wilt. Forbear, my lord! O speak not lightly of
A lady's love! It is her paramount
Especial jewel, over which keep guard
All things most rare in her tenacious sex;
Its radiant truth; its fragrant chastity;
Its goodness of the 'haviour of the heavens;
Its modesty—enhancement of all these—
Setting them off with veil more rare and rich
Than ever needle broider'd, or the loom!
If I were rich, my lord, as you would say,
'Twere scarce a theme for my rapt soul and me
To enter on so freely!

Lord Byer. You are worth
Her love, and have it, Wilton! Nay, she makes
No secret on't. Her father told me so;
Founded thereon rejection of my son,
Although with bitterness of galled pride.

Wilt. No wonder! He's a duke; and what am I?

Lord Byer. Why, Wilton, not the humble man you think!

Wilt. Again! You know the secret of my birth!

[*Rushing up to* LORD BYERDALE.]

Who were my parents!—O the loneliness
To live and feel, unknowing whence we sprung!
To bear most gratefully a heavy debt,
Enjoying boundless reverence and love,
Without a token of the benefactors
We owe it to! My lord, you are a father,—
You have a thought of what a son must feel
In plight so blank as mine! Who were my parents?—
Though they were peasants, tell me! All I want
Is but to know to whom my yearning heart
Has nature's right to cleave! That they are dead
I know.—Who were they? Tell me, that I make
Out of their memories, breathing, glowing things,
To keep with me and cherish and revere!

Lord Byer. Good Wilton—

Wilt. Nay, you have the knowledge.

Lord Byer. Yes.

Wilt. Then tell me what you know!—You would relieve
A famish'd man—my lord, I hunger more!

Lord Byer. Be patient!—Hear me!—Now is not the time;
Content you, what I know you shall be told.

Yet learn thus far:—Your veins are fraught with streams
Were running rich ere those that fill the Duke's

Were known to flow. Spare unavailing pains;

To that thou hast the power to compass, give
Your cares alone. The Lady Laura loves you;

You covet her; you shall possess her, ay,
With will of the proud Duke—if not—with *suit*!

I tell thee, Wilton, he will seek thee soon,
More heartily than he would shun thee now.

Reckon on that thou hast within thy reach,
And, as to other ventures, trust the winds!—

They'll bring them home before you look for them. [*Goes out.*]

Wilt. More light—not more content!—Better be dark

As ever.—Better not to know a part,

Than, knowing that, to have the rest withheld!

Who halts at prospect of the pinnacle

That gives him note his journey's end is nigh,

Except with fever of inquietude?

Way-gone and crippled, rather would he on,

Than lay him down and rest another night.

But I must rest, it seems, howe'er I can!

The knowledge of my birth brings knowledge else

He would withhold! Who has good news to tell

And does not tell it out?—Nay, if he stops,

It is for something that undoes the whole!

Conjecture's waste, that ends where it began!

Yet must I on again, nor better speed!

The Duke consent to mate his child with me?

How?—When?—A reason?—'Tis deception all!

He plays a part! Said not Lord Sherbrooke now

His heart was fraught with malice 'gainst the Duke,

And means he the Duke well?—He loves not me,

And does he mean me well? Tell me the Duke

Will sue to me to wed his noble child!

Oh, I would wed her!—but will wed her never,

Except with free and full consent of honour! [*Goes out.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in the Green Dragon.* SIR GEORGE BARKLEY, SIR RICHARD FENWICK, SIR WILLIAM PARKYN, SIR JOHN FRIEND, HARRISON, CHARNOCK, and others, seated round a table, whereon there are papers and other implements for writing. They rise and come forward.

Sir G. Bark. Sirs, 'tis the journey's end, without the toil,
The chance, a thousand things that stop the way,

On a long road, and cause the traveller
To curse the setting out—for what's the strife?
Why, James, or William of Nassau!—Away
With one of them—'tis done!

Sir R. Fen. It was the counsel
I cleaved to all along.

Sir W. Park. And I.

The others. [Except ARMSTRONG.] And all.

Sir G. Bark. Which, had it been allow'd to take its course,
Our hopes had been consummate now, instead
Of things to question. 'Sdeath, sirs! men resolved
To act, should on like men, and act at once,
Not stop and gape about them!

Arm. Colonel Green—

Sir G. Bark. Who's that? I trust all here are friends!

Arm. 'Twas I
That spoke!

Sir G. Bark. And what of Colonel Green?

Arm. The plan
Was liked by all but him—I meant to say
No more.

Sir G. Bark. The plan was liked by all but him!
Who broke it to him? 'Tis for him to act,
Not plot. He does not like the covert blow!
No more do I—no more does any man.
But if one blow will save a million, strike,
And never hang debating on the mode.
The Colonel has seen service—

Arm. You say right.
He's an old soldier and a gallant one!

Sir G. Bark. Who does not know it?—Will you let me
speak,

And bide your time—or, must you speak, speak on,
But tell us something new! He is a soldier,
And, would he mutter at an ambuscade?
Or, never has he plann'd nor captain'd one?
I warrant you!—'Twere news indeed to him
To tell him war is free to stratagems;
And says *he* it is peace? Why are we here,
And others sitting in our easy chairs?
Are not our own doors, sirs, thy very last
We dare to knock at? Are we the King's men,
And sits another on our master's throne?
The fight is over! Is it?—Ay!—indeed,
While in their sheaths our rapiers restless lie!
Before a month an army's in the field,
And is it peace?

Sir R. Fen. You are warm!

Sir G. Bark. I own I am.

Sir J. Friend. We are all agreed.

Sir G. Bark. But others should be here.
Where is the Duke of Gaveston?

Sir R. Fen. Have you broach'd
The purport of our meeting to his grace?

Sir G. Bark. No; for his grace is like a restive horse,
Given to back at starting—free enough,
If once he's made to go. Lead him by the head
A little, and he'll progress.

Sir W. Park. Hark! a step!

Sir G. Bark. See who it is!—Who is it?

Sir W. Park. 'Tis the Duke.

Enter the DUKE OF GAVESTON.

Sir G. Bark. Your grace is welcome, though the hour
rebukes
Your punctuality.

Duke of Gav. Nay, Sir George Barkley,
The most assur'd purpose must resign
The mastery to chance! My coach broke down.

Sir W. Park. His grace is full in time.

Sir G. Bark. I do not mean
To blame his grace—but a conspirator
Is one who sails in treacherous latitudes,
Where tempests give no warning, but blow up
The waves at once; where, while you look at him,
The sun goes out, and all the heaven is wrack;
And thunders bellow the next minute only,
To that when scarce the ripple at the bow
Whisper'd the vessel's course. So I mistrust,
Yet cause see none to fear. Possess the Duke
Of what we have debated and resolved.

[*The DUKE retires with SIR W. PARKYN.*]

Sir J. Friend. [*Aside to SIR G. BARKLEY.*] His grace is
potent; what if he demur?

Sir G. Bark. [*Aside to SIR J. FRIEND.*] He will demur!—
observe his grace's looks!

He likes not foreign aid!—That frets the grain.

He will not sail with us if he can help;

But he's aboard and we command the ship!

'Tis but "Up anchor," and we scud along!

The cloud again, but darker!

Duke of Gav. [*Coming forward.*] Never, sirs!

'Gainst foreign aid I enter, come what may,

My protest. If we cannot right ourselves,

We'll bear our wrongs, and let our brothers have

The day, howe'er unjustly, rather than

Commit ourselves and them into the hands

Of the natural enemy!—and as for him

Who has usurp'd the throne, as we aver,

Why, let him keep it, if to strike him thence

Needs the assassin's arm! The noblest cause

Were damn'd to seek success by means so foul!

The field, sirs, if you will!—I am with you there;

But not in a conspiracy like this,

Befitting men who make a trade of blood—
Abhor'd of those who hire them!

Sir G. Bark. You are quick
In making up your mind to draw your stakes!
You are in the game, and must abide the deal.

Duke of Gav. Must, sir!

Sir G. Bark. Plain speech fits best, in grave affairs!
Sirs, we are like to mariners escaped
A founderd ship, in open boat at sea;
The will of the majority is law,
He who demurs to which goes overboard!
Here are our measures stated; whereunto
Want but our signatures as evidence
For one and all, that all committed stand!
Come; while this solemn act proceeds, unsheath. [*They draw.*
His grace, in point of right, precedence takes.

Duke of Gav. I will not sign, sirs, neither draw my sword.

Sir G. Bark. [*Grasping the DUKE'S wrist.*] Nay, my lord
Duke, you must.

Col. Green. [*Entering.*] Good even, sirs!
A wanted guest may come unbidden.

Sir G. Bark. Green!
Who let you in?

Col. Green. Who durst not keep me out.
And if he could, what is the use of doors
When councils are not close?—You talk too much,
Good Sir George Barkley! Since I thwarted you
A month ago in these same measures, which,
To carry through, you now convene your friends,
You have boasted fifty times, by this and that,
To divers hearers, and in divers haunts,
You'd bring your plans to bear; in which, I grieve,
Others, that should know better, side with you.
But not with you my business.

Sir G. Bark. Whom besides?

Col. Green. The Duke of Gaveston. But that he were here,
I had not come. He is refractory;
I said he would be so, and I am glad;
For prophets like to see their words come true.
Good Sir George Barkley!—

Sir G. Bark. Sir?

Col. Green. You make too free
With his grace's sleeve! So please you, let it go.

Sir G. Bark. Who abets treachery?

Sir J. Friend and others. None here!

Col. Green. Well said,
Assassination! Well said, the allies
Of the common enemy!—the gentlemen
Who plan when William next should hunt the stag—
A masquerade, wherein the foreign bravo
Should don the British sportsman's jovial gear,
Who gives the game a chance!—who undertake

To give kind welcome to a force from France—
 Suffer her skipping sons to flourish here
 Weapons that never left their scabbards yet,
 Except with threat against a British throat!
 Who abets treachery? So!—Sir George Barkley, hear you?
 I say, once more, let go his grace's sleeve!
 I wish a word with him.

Sir G. Bark. Is't not enough
 We are gainsaid?—shall we be bearded too—
 Our weapons in our hands?

Col. Green. Beware, the first
 Who stirs to strike. Though many look one way,
 All are not of one mind. Good Sir George Barkley,
 You should know better! Men, in counting friends;
 May chance to overlook a foe or two.
 Before you call a game of swords, behoves
 You make sure of the sides. Moreover, sir,
 The wisest man counts most upon himself,
 As I, you see, have done!

*[Throws back his cloak, and shows himself provided
 with pistols, &c.]*

Beware, Sir George,
 For pistols make reports!—reports are heard!
 Triggers are quick! and, if the priming burns,
 Why then, in an old hand, is powder dust!
 I have a sword besides, that's used to odds,
 As more than one can vouch! Come, Sir George Barkley,
 Let go the Duke this minute, or the next
 A bullet's through your head!—You know I mark
 Whenever I take aim!

[SIR GEORGE BARKLEY releases the DUKE.]

That's courteous, sir!
 Your grace will please to leave my frontage clear,
 And step a pace behind me. Now, Sir George,
 A minute's parley, if you will.

Char. We treat
 You fairly; wherefore do you thwart us thus?

Col. Green. You treat me fairly! Hear you, Sir George
 Barkley—

I speak to you, sir, you! the head of those
 Who treat me fairly! Sir, you hatch'd this plot
 Without my privity! Was that fair? It
 Was wise—I should have crush'd it in the hatching!
 You warn'd me hold myself in readiness,
 With ten of those who follow me, to back you
 In the enterprise, but never once let out
 The nature on't,—Was that fair? It was prudent:
 The breath, you breathed it in, had been your last one!
 A friend—I have some—put me on my guard.
I was to learn hereafter! when I stood
 Unwittingly committed in the fact!
 And yet he tells me I am treated fairly!

And had it come to pass, sure as you hear me,
Straight to the block had I given up myself,
And dragg'd you thither with me, one and all!

Sir G. Bark. Design you to betray us?

Col. Green. No; that's truth;

But I'll defeat your plans!—That's truth again!
Your names I ne'er divulge! Your heads are safe,
For any hint that I shall give the axe!

Arm. He is a man of honour—fear him not.

Sir G. Bark. But I *do* fear him.

Col. Green. Do, and reap the fruit!

A craven spirit scared without a cause!

Sir G. Bark. We should not let him go.

Col. Green. Nay, but you should.

Sir G. Bark. Wherefore?

Col. Green. Because you must. Good even, friends!

Be what you were, when I made one among you,—

Soldiers!—I hold not compact with assassins!

Trust to yourselves!—Make not allies of foes!

For him who owns the throne, another fills;

Array the honourable, open field,

Then call me traitor if I show not there!

Pray move not from your places—We can find

The stairs without your help—which, trust me, sirs,

Were pains that scarcely would repay themselves;

And so I take my leave.—A kind good night!

*[The DUKE and COLONEL GREEN go out. The others
draw into a knot in the back of the stage.]*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—A Room in Kensington Palace.

Enter COLONEL GREEN and a PAGE.

Col. Green. My business will not stay, sir! 'Tis direct
And urgent: It is done this very hour,
Or not at all. Your own discretion use;
But using it, remove all blame from me.
The council sits; and, as you say, no doubt
On grave affairs; but graver bring me hither.
So tell Lord Portland.

Page. May I crave your name?

Col. Green. No, sir; my business is my name; and that
I tell to none but him.

Page. He scarce will grant
An audience to an unknown visitor.

Col. Green. And, if I give my name, I am unknown:
What then, sir? Do you know me? No. To you
Or him, I give what name I please; but, save

My own, I shall give none, and that, so please you,
 I will not give. My business is of moment!—
 Instant in matter vital to the king:
 That, for your warrant to perform my wish.
 Yet something farther. Tell his lordship, one
 Whose life he saved, craves speech with him. The Boyne
 Will help his memory as to time and place.
 An officer dismounted in the rout,
 Who would not ask his life from swords, enow
 To give discomfort to a wavering troop:—
 His lordship saw my plight—call'd off the dogs,
 And saved the game, at bay! He'll recollect,
 Else is his memory shorter, sir, than mine;
 For I shall ne'er forget it till I die!
 Now may I trust you'll pleasure me?

Page. I shall.

[*Goes out.*]

Col. Green. No man is bound when evil counsels warp
 Those he contracted with on honest grounds.
 There's the default of combinations. Men
 Respect the compact more than they love truth.
 Keep it together when 'tis crack'd and flaw'd
 With rank defect, through folly creeping in,
 Cunning or crime; and ought to fall to pieces!
 Brand me a traitor!—say I am forsworn!—
 If I must hold with men, or lose the grasp
 Of mine own soul! Away the allegation
 That flouts the laws of man—mocks those of Heaven!
 My honour's dear content is cheaply kept
 At loss of the whole world!—Conscience is all!
 But let me not forget the leaguer'd Duke,
 Now in the toils of some close enemy—
 Belike the Earl of Byerdale.—Revenge
 For the rejection of the son! 'Twas strange
 They captured him, yet laid not hand on me.
 Herein his case I have in full set forth,
 And pleaded, as his bearing warranted,
 For Wilton's sake. No friend of mine is he!

Enter the PAGE, conducting in the KING.

Page. This is the person.

King. So!—You may withdraw.

[*PAGE retires.*]

I recollect him! though twelve years might serve
 A longer memory for plea to lose
 A trace of one beheld but once, and then
 In wrack of tempest. Yes; it is the man!
 Though by his air, more than his person known.
 He knows not me. Report, that gatherer
 Of all that comes to hand—which oft picks up
 Falsehood as truth—has pass'd another for me.
 Your business, sir?

Col. Green. See I at last the man
 To whom I owe my life?

King. You see that man.

Col. Green. And, if I do, first let me say to him
My debt, although long due, was ne'er forgot;
And though to pay it I am bankrupt, save
In gratitude, yet that has known no waste
From lapse of time; but still has grown and grown,
Till now my heart, half-bursting with its freight,
Has scarce the power to lay it down before him!

King. [*Aside.*] A man of generous nature well as brave!
Myself befriended, I befriending you!
I recollect you; though the veil which years
Casts o'er the face, they have had time to weave.
I recollect you, sir! A gallant man
Is scarce forgotten by his brother, though
At odds with him—especially when seen
In strait that proves him mettle to the core!
Such as beleaguer'd you. I am very glad
You 'scaped the further hazard of the day,
And live in health to this.

Col. Green. O, my good lord—

King. Your business, pray you?

Col. Green. If I speak of one,
You serve and reverence, by a title, less
Than that you name him by, forgive a man
Who having been the subject of a king
Who had a throne, pays him allegiance now
Without one!

King. Sir, I understand you. Spare
Excuses! Save compunction! We shall speak
Of William of Nassau. What you would say
Refers to him?

Col. Green. His safety!

King. Ay!

Col. Green. His life!

King. His life is in High Hands, sir, and to those
He trusts it!

Col. Green. Those who do not fear such hands
Are arm'd against his life.

King. Sir, every day
Is rife with rumours—every day we hear
Of plots a-hatching, ready to start up;
Yet day succeeds to day and nothing stirs
To cost a wink of sleep!—The King's at ease
Or, if it please you,—William of Nassau!

Col. Green. Your lordship will compel me say the "King,"
If for my feelings thus you tax your own;
And, yet, I should not say it.

King. Nothing say
But what you should say. What's the danger, sir,
You hint at?

Col. Green. What I know on better ground
Than simple rumour! What with my own eyes

I have seen—have heard with mine own ears—had been
A party to, but that, at the first blush,
My soul revolted at the treason!

King. Treason

To William of Nassau!

Col. Green. To mine own honour!

King. I thought, sir, 'twas the life of such a man
I saved! Go on!

Col. Green. Ere I proceed, I have
A boon to ask—nay, a condition.

King. Well!

Say a condition, 'tis accorded!—Name it.

Col. Green. Not to be importuned—far less required—

To divulge a single name!—for they are mates

I hitherto made common cause with—brothers

In honourable venture—bonded with me

By wear of sinew and by waste of blood.

If I defeat the guilt, it is enough;

I'll not betray the guilty, come what may!

King. It is enough!

Col. Green. But further yet, my lord;
If aught transpire to bring to perfect light

The plot with its contrivers, I shall stand

Aloof!—no evidence of mine be call'd

To fix the penalty on the accused—

And though it were, I should be mute, and keep

My silence steadfast to the very block.

King. I think you would!—Have all that you demand—

My honour is implugged! And now the peril?

Col. Green. Assassination!

King. That is a base pass

For your king's cause to come to!

Col. Green. On my soul

He knows it not! Did he, upon the same

Immortal, irrecoverable pledge,

If forfeited—he would denounce it, though

It cost frustration of his regal hopes!

King. [After a pause.] You are a loyal man!—What farther,
sir,

Concerning William of Nassau? Unless—

You throw some farther light, he's struck before

He sees the blow.

Col. Green. To-morrow he will dine

With my Lord Romney—

King. Ay?—Behoves our William

He whisper his engagements with his friends!

Well?

Col. Green. He will be beset with twice the sum
Of his accusom'd guards.

King. That's matter, sir:

Proceed.

Col. Green. On Saturday, towards ten at night,

He is like to pass 'cross Turnham Green.

King. Indeed!

A worse than bootless journey saved perhaps,
Or taken at more charge of retinue!
Aught else?

Col. Green. If they are baffled there, he hunts;
And, on some breathing-day, they will take care
To turn out such a field that Death himself
Shall ride along with him.

King. They go to work
In earnest!

Col. Green. O, my lord! Protect your king!
Counsel him to be wary! Hedge him round
With safety thickly!—thickly, my good lord!
For your own sake—for your fair country's sake,
That loathes the secret stab—Nay for his own!
For he is brave—a thousand miles above
A foul and dastard death!—an upright prince!
As all allow—even his enemies!
Grateful to those who serve him—meaning well,
Even in the act which I and many more
Traverse and bear with blame—Although to him
I ne'er owe fealty, nor bend the knee,
Nor—

King. Stop!—you are in error all along;
Which, with your leave, I now will set to rights.
'Tis not the lord of Portland talks with you;
'Twas not the lord of Portland saved your life;
His squadrons William of Nassau awhile
In person led. He saw you, thick beset;
He heard the death or quarter proffer'd you;
The latter, point at throat, you would not ask!—
The first, were ready—like a cavalier
Whose soul was in the cause he battled for
And saw was lost—to take! He stopp'd the thrust
Saw you remount, and order'd you free way!
You say it was a debt—well; be it so!
But, if it was, 'tis amply, now, repaid;
And take acquittance full, and thanks, to boot,
From William of Nassau!

Col. Green. The king!—My life
Your highness' gift!—Then 'tis your highness' due,
And on my knee, I tender it!

King. Indeed!—

I did not look for this.

Col. Green. I know it, sire!
And, therefore, tender't the more heartily.

King. Rise, pray you!

Teach me how I am to name you.
You hesitate!—Enough!—Take your own time
And opportunity. I shall expect
To hear from you.—Nay, since you give me right—

Command you, that you, then, apprise me fully
Touching the knowledge which I now forego!
And now, good morning, sir. — If I have found
A subject, well! — if not — you have found a friend!

Col. Green. A king! my liege.

King. Then, sir, the better friend!

Col. Green. O, yet vouchsafe, my liege, another moment:
One who his life imperill'd yesternight,
Discountenancing foulest treachery,
Was in my presence by your messenger
Arrested, and, as truly I believe,
Not upon public but base private grounds —
The Duke of Gaveston.

King. Ay! — I know the Duke
Affects another's cause; but, by my crown,
I hold him as an open enemy,
And bear no grudge to him. — Concerns that scroll
The Duke?

Col. Green. [*Presenting the scroll.*] It does.

King. I shall peruse it, sir,
And when I know the man who gave it me —
As now do hold you bound to let me know him —
Declare my judgment on it.

Col. Green. Yet, my liege,
Another moment. — Deem me not a man
Who loosely cleaves! Had I been such a one,
I had been shaken off by slights, neglects,
Short-comings, and offences, long ago!
Nay, farther, — think not 'tis my personal
Peculiar debt alone determines me
I' the transfer of my duty; for of late,
I have begun to see, despite my wish,
Another good, neglected formerly,
Incorporated with the regal weal
In your more equal, patriotic sway.
I say't with pain of heart, yet hearty faith,
And, to assert it, henceforth draw my breath.

[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE II. — LORD BYERDALE'S Library. WILTON
discovered sitting. He comes forward.

Will. Hope! ready promiser, unsure performer,
Unequal architect, that builds the mole,
Which breaks the mountain billows into spray;
Or fabrics fragile, as the gossamer's,
That come and vanish with the dews of morn;
Bitter betrayer, yet sweet counsellor,
Voucher believed, with thousand broken oaths!
Friend false, yet, for a fair face, trusted still —

Why do I listen to thee? Joyful dream,
 That turns out, oft, on waking, blank despair,
 Why do I trust thy visions, and dream on,
 Gazing on the good I never may enjoy?
 Yet art thou blest so far—The naked wretch
 Goes clad by thee, the while—the hungry feasts!
 The woe-begone forget their tears and smile!
 The greater part of being is fill'd up
 With solace by thee, and the load, that else
 Would break the back, is borne with patience still!
 Thou art the anodyne which lulls the pang,
 That should not chide thee, though it wakes again!
 The stimulant which breaks the lethargy,
 Which, though it close on us again, thou robb'st
 Of so much being, else were swallow'd up!
 Thou art a good, although a doubtful one,
 And, wanting thee, this fitful course of life
 Were never half run through! I'll deal with thee!
 But, yet, with question; so, by thy default
 I suffer less, and, if thou keep'st thy word,
 Lose nothing of the gain thou promisest!

Enter WILLIAMS.

Will. A lady, sir, would speak with you.

Willt. A lady?—

With me?—Conduct her in.

[WILLIAMS goes out.]

What sympathy

Lives 'twixt my heart and hers that comes, that thus
 I am all alarms?

[WILLIAMS re-enters, conducting in LADY LAURA veiled.]

Withdraw.

[WILLIAMS goes out. WILTON offers a chair, which is declined.]

Will you not sit?

[She declines again.]

Madam, your will?

Lady Lau. The fullest credit, sir,
 A gentlewoman in unwonted strait,
 Compelling her to slight allowed forms,
 May challenge at a man of honour's hands.

Willt. [Aside.] The voice is hers—her lineaments and form,
 Her air betrays, which none could mock so well,
 As to deceive the eye, instructed once
 How symmetry and beauty bear themselves
 United in one costly paragon!

Lady Lau. A tardy answer speaks a doubtful suit;
 The boon we wish to grant is graced at once!
 I blush enough, believe me, at my boldness,
 To need to blush at your rebuff as well.

Willt. [Rushing up to her and taking her hand.] It must be you!

Lady Lau. [*Throwing back her veil.*] Wilton, 'tis I!—

[*WILTON offers to kneel.*] Forbear.

Nay, keep your feet. Knee give me none, save that

Obedience bends! I know not reverence

Of shows and words!—I challenge none at all!

Why should I?—I, that poorly have upheld

My maiden state! or am I, all-forgot?

And did you woo me long?—protest your love.

A thousand times ere I would lend an ear?

Sue me with sighs as thick as winter gusts,

To win a breath of faint encouragement?

Besiege each access to my chary love,

My pity, pride, trust, generosity,

Till heart of stone could not withstand the dint

Of such enforcement, and, to yield, became

A grace in most unquestion'd modesty?

Didst thou all these, or any one of these?

Or—was I cheaper than a peasant won,

That's found not, save by seeking?

Wilt. Lady—

Lady Lau. Lady!

Ay; I have borne myself most loftily!

Maintain'd my sex's rights with most high hand!

I thought I had!—If I had met you, Wilton,

In a gay ball, I should have pass'd you by

With eye withdrawn soon as it lit on you;

For face and form of man I ne'er perused,

So was I wont to pore upon the spirit

That makes the high romantic in your sex;

But when I mark'd your visage kindling up

With all that prompts what chivalry enacts,

As, single to my foes you stood opposed—

A bastion 'twixt aggression and the weak—

Comely and stately! garrison'd by proof

Of valour, truth, and generosity,

The vision, which, from girlhood e'en till then,

My soul had raised, embodied stood before me,

And all my woman's nature clung to thee!

Wilt. What mean your words? Something is wrong! What is it?

Lady Lau. All's wrong!—A maid should be an icicle,

Yielding but drop by drop—and then with chilling

Cold to the last! Melting, not of herself,

But 'gainst her nature!—then she's worth the thawing!

Frankness in her is not a virtue, or

'Tis one that will undo her! She should go

Without a heart!—It is her poverty

To have one! Men aver they prize her for't;

But when they find she has one, and 'tis theirs,

They care for't, as for that they cast away!

Wilt. And if your heart is mine, my dearest hopes
Were with it cast away.

Lady Lau. Your dearest hopes!
They are no longer hopes!—You are sure of them!
Will. Madam!

Lady Lau. Ay, madam!
My Lady Laura Gaveston!—the Duke's daughter!
Tell me the truth! Have I not play'd my part
Most poorly? With most abject, paltry spirit?
O, but a maid's in an extremity
That tells her love! But do me justice, sir;
Or hear me justify myself! I saw you
Of humble rank, but thought your nature noble
Beyond enhancing by a thousand patents!
I saw that you affected me—you did so!
But that, what the mere name of rank had loosed
Its essence tied—your tongue.—I spoke, because
You could not speak—spoke for myself, I own,
But for myself, because I spoke for you;
Else, never!—I had wither'd to a shroud,
And all had wonder'd how! With but my heart
You might have staid content, as I with yours,
My hand, have left to chance! It was not fair
To win it in a strait, without advice
Or hint! No will of mine consulted!—"Yea,"
Or "Nay," a cipher!—no more option than
A bargain bought and sold! Yours will I be,
But how? With all my heart? No, Wilton!—Go
Not back for what I speak!—I will be thine—
It must be, but alas! how fall'n in pride!
How shamed beyond endurance! how betray'd!
How jarr'd in love—for O, I love you still!
How broken in content at prospering!—
How balk'd in all made hope of union sweet!

Will. How comes this ruin where I nothing see
That's flaw'd, far less gives way?—O lady!—

Lady Lau. Peace!
Enough! To-night we wed.

Will. We wed to-night!

Lady Lau. Whence all this wonder where there's nothing
new?

Will. All's new to me! All strange that you aver,—
The last most strange of all!

Lady Lau. And know you naught
Touching the Earl?

Will. [Recollecting himself.] The Earl!

Lady Lau. You recollect!—
Your wander'd thoughts come home!

Will. I see it all!
Something has been transacted which you think
I have lent aidance to,—with which my wish,
You think, has gone along, or my consent!
I am clear as your unquestionable self
In each of these respects! The Earl—

Lady Lau. Go on!—
There is the shoal that wrecks me, or, escaped,
Sees me at anchor with a freight to scorn
An argosie!—Go on!—

Wilt. What you aver
Shall come to pass, he told me should arrive.

Lady Lau. But not the means?—Wilton, if yet I doubt,
It is with yearning for the clearing up,
That brightness may be perfect—not a wreath
To flit across the welkin of my hopes,—
But sun! all sun!—But not the means?

Wilt. No!

Lady Lau. No?
I am thy wife to-night! At ten to-night
I plight thee troth for troth!

Wilt. Where?

Lady Lau. Bless thee for
That question!

Wilt. Where?

Lady Lau. Again? Nor once too oft—
O my tenacious soul, not pleased enough
With proof on proof, but grasps at more and more.
Where?—Guess!

Wilt. Thy father's house?

Lady Lau. My father's jail!

Wilt. His jail!

Lady Lau. The Tower! Nay, do not gasp; and yet
Didst thou not, Wilton, I should stint for breath,
I should not heed, though ne'er again I drew!
Forgive me! Clear thou nothing know'st! Forgive me!

[*Kneels to WILTON.*]

Wilt. Rise!

Lady Lau. To thy arms I will—my pardon seal'd!

Wilt. [*Raising her.*] O, hope outdone—reality undream'd.

Lady Lau. Listen, lest opportunity be gone.

My father on a charge of treason bides

A pris'ner in the Tower. These are times

When not men's reasons, but their passions, fill

The judgment-seat; wherefore, it oft goes hard

With innocence itself. The axe alone

Is sure of its rights, and those, and more, it gets;

And takes them sudden quick!—Ah, Wilton!—Well!—

This knows my father—this the Earl has urged:

Has plann'd evasion of, and will afford;

Upon condition that the hour which sets

My father free, shall see his child in bonds

She'll wear with all her heart—put on by thee!

Forbear! I know thy thoughts!—Speak not!—Hear mine!

It must be!—More a maiden should not say!

Yet wherefore?—Love that's not ingenuous

Does not deserve and should abjure the name!

Whate'er the motives of the subtle Earl,

Let it be, Wilton, for my father's sake!
 If not for his sake, let it be for thine!
 If that lacks cogency, for my sake, then! [*Knocking.*
 Listen—a summons at the portal!—Wilton,
 Pay me no tendance as I leave the house;
 Let me go forth as I were nobody!
 Thou'lt do my bidding?

Wilt. Yes.

Lady Lau. Thy word's my soul!
 At ten to-night, thou wedd'st me in the Tower! [*Goes out.*

Wilt. With faculties more lapsed, ne'er vision left
 The rapt beholder—vanishing, while yet
 His soul was on the strain, where tension stops,
 Or snaps! Belief at once recoils, and trusts;
 Questions the senses, with their evidence
 Distinct and strong as e'er defied disproof!
 Asks "Is it so?" and answer'd to content
 Of reason, starts a doubt, and asks again,
 Without a ground save its own strange amaze!
 Give loose to joy, and welcome Fortune, though
 Her visit is unlook'd for, and she comes
 With face all bright, where scarce you hoped a smile!
 The Earl?—Why, how is this?—Why breaks he up
 The goodly company of my fair thoughts,
 That fly at his approach!

Lord Byer. [*Entering.*] Wilton, good news!
 I would have been the harbinger, but find
 A friend has been beforehand with me—still
 I say "Good news!" and give thee hearty joy!
 The Lady Laura weds thee, boy, to-night;
 And hence you bear her! Said I not, good Wilton,
 It should be so? And that it is so, take
 The warrant of the Duke.— [*Gives a paper.*

You have his child's;
 I met her as I enter'd. Sooth, she well
 Affects thee!—a fair bride, and free as fair!
 See how her father makes thee full amends
 For all the slight he show'd thee.

Wilt. [*Reading.*] From the Tower?

Lord Byer. Ay, Wilton. He would meddle—take a part—
 In the game arch-traitors play—The cards were struck
 From his hands, though scarce in time to save the stake,
 His life—which he must owe to thee.—You read?

Wilt. I do, my lord.

Lord Byer. He speaks his wishes plainly?

Wilt. He does.

Lord Byer. And urgently?

Wilt. And urgently.

Lord Byer. I said it should be so.

Wilt. You did—but—

Lord Byer. But!—
 Do you demur? Well?—What?—Is the Duke to die?

Wilt. I would but ask—

Lord Byer. You would but ask—

Wilt. My lord!—

Lord Byer. Ask nothing when your wish is at the door!

But welcome it, lest, if you shut it out,

It ne'er may come again! I have done my best,

And brook not questioning. Are you content,

Or are you not? If not, no harm is done

To you; and, for the Duke he must abide

The issue whereto you abandon him!

Speaks the Duke plainly?

Wilt. Yes.

Lord Byer. The lady said

That you stood bound to her to do his will.

Good sooth, it cost no effort, I should think!

Why start a hindrance now?

Wilt. I started none:

I only—

Lord Byer. Only is too much—offence

My honour will not brook. You doubt the means—

I know you do.—Doubt on, and lose the end!

The actor vouches for the act, and scorns

Interpretations—which come gracelessly

From those he means to serve! I am content;

Let that suffice!—If not, why let it pass!

And on good fortune turn the thankless back.

Wilt. I am not unthankful.

Lord Byer. No? Then close at once;

And, without more ado, with what's proposed:

Do you?

Wilt. I do.

Lord Byer. Your honour to't!

Wilt. 'Tis given.

Lord Byer. Take in exchange the bridegroom's joy to-night,

Who at the altar clasps the maid he loves

In that embrace, which fathers can't unlock.

I'll write a word or two.

[Sits and writes.

Wilt. I feel as one

Who walks 'midst quicksands, and at every step

Fears to be swallow'd up. My heart misgives—

Tells me some gulf's at hand—yet must I on!

Lord Byer. This gives you entrance to the Tower, and this

Egress with whom you will. I'll wait you here.

Ten is the hour. The chaplain of the fortress

Has been bespoken, and will tie the knot

Quickly and fast. Prepare you for love's voyage;

Hence shall you hie to ship! Fair winds attend you!

Wilt. O, yet a word, my lord—No doubt—a boon,

Touching myself alone! You said my blood

Was richly noble—tell me who I am!

Lord Byer. [After a pause.] I will, upon condition of an oath.

Wilt. Propound it.

Lord Byer. That what I divulge you'll keep
Strict from your mistress and the Duke, until
His prison walls are pass'd. It alters naught
Which ought to stand.—Thou art of noble blood—

Wilt. Am I?—I give my oath.

Lord Byer. [*Aside.*] I nothing risk!
It is a triumph which invites me now,
And longer to delay were misery.

Wilt. O speak, my lord!

Lord Byer. I see you burn to know.
Wilton, we share one blood.

Wilt. My gracious lord!

Lord Byer. I am your uncle!—

Wilt. If my duty—

Lord Byer. Nay;
I claim no duty from you! You are e'en
My eldest brother's son.

Wilt. His son, my lord!

Lord Byer. But not his heir.—There was a bar to that!

Wilt. A bar! What bar?

Lord Byer. Your mother bless'd his bed;
But not that bed, the priest—She loved and fell!
Wilton, I have kept my word!—Keep thou thy oath!

[*Goes out.*]

Wilt. Monster!—O, double malice! Hate 'gainst me!
Revenge against the Duke!—Both in the clutch
Of his most devilish craft! The Duke with life
In jeopardy—which but these nuptials save!
The terms of liberty, which, till he gains,
My lips are seal'd. No option left him, thus,
Betwixt disgrace and death! With branded brow
Espouse his trusting honourable child!
Swear in the very act of such betrayal,
To love and cherish her! Myself a monster,
Save I incur the blight of perjury!
Dilemma hideous and inextricable!
Guidance! Help! Succour! Where shall they be found?

[*Goes out.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Street.*

Enter WILTON BROWN and LORD SHERBROOKE.

Wilt. Counsel me, Sherbrooke! I am past advice
Or aidance from myself!—a man in bonds—
Imprison'd—one whose substance goes to rack
On a nefarious plea, which but his face
Would quash, and he's restrain'd from showing it!

Sher. Collect your thoughts! Be more yourself!

Wilt. I cannot!

To Lady Laura stand I pledged, to-night
To change my troth with hers before the priest!
Thy father's bondsman am I, further yet,
Until that league of love I implement;
And further still, the Duke's life hostage held,
Which, if I know him, he would forfeit sooner
Than suffer a polluted stream to mix
With the pure current of his costly blood;
Yet there debar'd of option, by my oath
To keep my secret till his liberty
Is by his own undoing perfected.
What's to be done?

Sher. What is a man to do
That's in the grasp of stronger men than he,
But go along with them? Scruples that can't
Avail, should never chafe! What I should do,
And could, I would do; but, the power away,
The crime of the omission is away!
Our parentage is not of our own choice,
So its discredit to its framers stick,
Not us; and hang the world that makes it ours!
Sooth, though the banns had never been proclaim'd,
I had been still the goodly youth I am;
The same engaging features—shapely form—
Right gallant carriage—girth and height without
Abatement of the matter of an inch!
The same bold, merry heart, and pranksome wit;
Yea, I believe my blood had been the same,
The same my hair and skin! Tut, Wilton! men
Should answer for themselves, and live and breathe
In others' 'count by their own deeds alone!

Wilt. A friend that knew my wishes and my strait,
Might, of his own accord, effect for me
What mocks my faculty!

Sher. And if he did,
How might you thank him by-and-by? No, sir;
I live in hopes to be a god-father,
And can't forego the chance. I would enjoy,
Moreover, the bride's customary bounty—
The blushing kiss, I, else, may never get;
Besides, I wish the race to multiply!
It is a matter that concerns the state,
And I, a loyal subject, should not thwart.
Then I have thoughts, myself, of matrimony,
Although an indefinable mistrust,
And so would profit, like a thorough friend,
By your experiment. 'Sdeath! would you spoil
The chance of such a Benedict as I?

Wilt. Sherbrooke, you jest; and honour is in question!

Sher. And if it were, Wilton, I should not jest,

But set you free at thralldom of my life.

Look you; you blush to share my blood! Go to!

I would the share were double what it is!

I would you were my brother! Were you, and

With like discrepancy, my thrice-bound love,

Being the man of merit that you are,

Had, more than even, made the faultless odds!

Wilt. The friend that soothes me tells me what I am,

Plain as the enemy that bears me hard!

I wear a branded name.

Sher. No name's a brand

When Virtue is the wearer!

Wilt. I must seek

A sterner counsellor!

Sher. Then come with me

To Colonel Green. No question! If there lives

The man to help you, he's the very man.

More could I tell you—what shall soon be known.

Give me my way in this, then take your own!

SCENE II.—*A Room in the Green Dragon.*—COLONEL GREEN
discovered with papers.

Col. Green. Why, this is granting favours like a king!

My case was all I stated; and the suit

I might, with doubt, have founded thereupon,

His clemency has of itself inferr'd,

And to his bounty pleaded royally!

One deed of grace has swept all acts away—

All penalties; and, in their place, supplied

Freedom and honour; nor to me alone,

But those I cherish closer than myself.

One only boon I ask'd—that granted too;

Enlargement of the Duke, assoil'd by me.

Thus, Wilton, from the net wherein the Earl

Thinks he has mesh'd him, is, at once, set free!

Why comes he not? Sherbrooke would see him straight—

That goodly sample of the choice and few

Who love so heartily another's weal,

In following it, they overlook their own.

Steps! it is he.

Enter WILTON.

I have expected you.

Wilt. So was I told; and I am here.

Col. Green. At last.

I gave you invitation long before,

Which, in the way of common courtesy,

You might have honour'd; gave you hint, beside,

Of knowledge which concern'd you—which, to gain,
A visit might suffice.

Wilt. I know too much !

Col. Green. Not so. You must know more.

Wilt. Time flies !

Col. Green. It does !

But trust and fortune match its utmost speed !

Wilt. The first I have, the second have to find.

Col. Green. It may be nearer than you count.

Wilt. How, sir ?

Col. Green. It may be close at hand. Heaven will send help

When man believes to look for it is vain.

You trust in Heaven ?

Wilt. I have no other trust !

Col. Green. [*Giving a paper.*] There !

Wilt. How !—The liberation of the Duke !

Can I believe it ?

Col. Green. Can you doubt it ? Fresh !—

And from the king's own hand.

Wilt. God save the king !

Col. Green. Now, have you leisure for a word or two ?

Wilt. Twenty, if spoken quickly—for my soul

Is on the wing to thwart iniquity,

And do a righteous deed.

Col. Green. The instrument

That paper ?—How will you employ it ?

Wilt. Set

The Duke at liberty ; and, then, the spot

That blurs me laying open to the day,

Release him from his promise to the Earl,

Forego his daughter's hand, and, as I may,

Buffet the world with shamed, but manly front !

Col. Green. Fathers, young man, are hardly in their graves

When, from their children, thus, their spirits breathe !

Wilt. Knew you my father ?

Col. Green. Yes ; of him I'd speak—

Not much—of one he loved, a little more.

I chanced to be the nearest friend of both—

I mean, the heart-friend. Have you patience ?

Wilt. Ask

When you observe me fail !

Col. Green. [*Having placed chairs for himself and WILTON.*]

Your father died

In battle, fighting for the banish'd king !

His brother—

Wilt. What ! the Earl ?

Col. Green. No ; he had two,

Of whom the Earl was but the younger one.

I speak of the elder. Death, that struck your father,

Miss'd him ; and, as in spite at his escape,

Left him almost a broken heart—for much

He loved your father! Well; the fight was o'er;
 The second brother bann'd—flight was his chance;
 But you, an infant, must be left behind
 Without a friend.—He linger'd still for you;
 For well he knew his younger brother's ward—
 For reasons, now to tell were waste of time—
 Had more of danger than of safety in't.
 Still had he motives for soliciting
 That brother's aid—a purse without a doit!—
 He sought it. It was granted readily;
 For in succession, failing you, he stood
 Next to his elder brother.

Wilt. He was next.

I was, alas! no bar—I say “alas!”
 But for the cause.—It had rejoiced my soul
 That elder brother had been heir to all!

Col. Green. Again your father speaks.—Let me go on!
 Time flies.

Wilt. I heed not time!—I list to you!

Col. Green. Means were supplied. Upon the western coast,
 One lowering night, both brothers stood with you;
 Your hand in his who loved you as his son!
 A barque was in the offing, heavily
 Riding at anchor, bound that night to sail;
 A boat was waiting—

Wilt. Ah!—I recollect
 That father-uncle!—He leap'd into it
 With me in his arms!

Col. Green. Yes; while his brother stood
 And utter'd no dissuasion, though the waves,
 Warning the shore with louder waxing swell,
 Gave token that the sea was rousing up;
 Though the rough wind advised him of its mood,
 Bawling against you, as to turn you back;
 Though from your eyes the sun, just setting, hid,
 As if averse to tempt you with a look;
 Though on the land sat gloom and doubt and dread,
 As though it cried “God help you!”—not “God speed!”
 There stood that brother, like a barren rock,
 Above the shingles, that were following you
 With clamour, like rough friends, but kind, that wail
 “Good bye” to those they doubt to see again!

Wilt. We did not reach the ship!

Col. Green. 'Twas well!—She sank
 With every soul on board.—It was not meant
 That you should reach her, though 'twas thought you did,
 By those who wish'd you partners of her fate.
 Your course was changed advisedly; the land
 Was made again, though many miles away;
 Distance was safety to you!—Ask no more.
 Hands for your fosterage, on which you held
 Some claims of blood upon your mother's side,

Your uncle sought; but, reaching found them cold,
 Not in defection towards you, but in death.
 They were proud ones!—The proudest must shake hands
 With Death at last!

Wilt. Then was my mother of
 A noble stock?

Col. Green. She was. Inquire as yet
 No more. Thy uncle was no guardian for thee—
 Unsafe the ward of plots and enterprises—
 Heaven sent a friend at last!—he gave you to him.
 The nobleman who train'd you, Wilton, till
 You grew the man you are—who placed you with
 The Earl, who never half-redeem'd his pledge
 To see your fortunes better'd—but, beholding
 Your father's face in yours, gave credit to
 The elements for ruth he grudged them have,
 And through inquiries, back'd by power and gold,
 Proved his surmises true.

Wilt. Speak not of him!
 But tell me of that uncle—how fared he?

Col. Green. Remain'd an outlaw still.

Wilt. Is he alive?

Col. Green. Better, perhaps, of him we speak no more.

Wilt. Is he alive?

Col. Green. Alive?—You well may ask,
 When every hour the gibbet look'd for him.

Wilt. The gibbet!—Heaven!

Col. Green. Ay, sir. It had been well
 For you, your uncle in his bed had died!

Wilt. I heed not how
 My uncle died—I only heed his death.
 The manner of it, but for him, I wish
 Other than what it was, if such it was!
 I heed the shame? Were he alive, and now
 In jeopardy of such extremity,
 With all the dismal stages yet to pass,
 I'd stand beside him in the felon's dock;
 I'd lie beside him in the convict's cell;
 I'd walk beside him to the fatal tree—
 Which, if I could, with marble I'd supplant—
 A monument, whereon I would record
 His honour'd name, and all he did for me,
 And under-grave my own in love and gratitude!

[*COL. GREEN rushes up to the table, throws himself into
 a chair, and hides his face in his hands.*]

What ails you, sir? You are convulsed. Sir!—sir!
 What ails you?—Speak to me!—Or can't you speak,
 Or don't you hear?—You shake from head to foot.
 What shall be brought you?—Whom shall I call for?

Col. Green. [*Starting up.*] Call
 For Henry Sherbrooke!—If you know not him,
 Then find me Wilton Brown.—'Tis all the same—

Child—stripling—man—my eldest brother's son—
The boy that stood upon the beach with me
Twelve years and more ago!

Wilt. My uncle!

Col. Green. Ay!

Unscathed! Alive! as ne'er he was before.
The uncle in whose arms you lay, the night
We took the boat upon that stormy beach.

Wilt. Take me again to them, or else I drop!

Col. Green. Rouse thee, boy, rouse thee! Something
is to do!

Collect thyself—The Duke!—'Tis near the time!

Wilt. From what a trance have you awaken'd me
Of happiness, to what reality!

Col. Green. Reality! Why, Wilton, look on me;
Aged in my prime, the work of years outdone
By watchings, strugglings, strainings, spent in vain!
Of glory deeply smit, as you, with love,
Yet baffled in my wooing worse than you!
Reality! There's none, boy, but the thought
Of doing right! He grasps who holds to that!
You'll do your duty?

Wilt. Will I not?

Col. Green. You will!

Wilt. Uncle, 'tis death!—but I'll go through with't still!

[*They go out.*]

SCENE III.—*A place near Kensington Palace.*

Lord Byer. This summons to the king fell out perversely.
As jaded traveller, when drawing near
His journey's end, feels every mile a league,
So, my revenge, at hand, but still delay'd,
Turns minutes into hours! Ten stages Time
Has paced since noon, still lagging more and more;
And now he seems to stop! Will he go on?
He's half-way to the next; yet, to my thought,
He has not stirr'd! Life, measured by suspense,
Lasts ages!—Talk of threescore years and ten!
A day, an hour, has durance of a life!
Yet am I ill at ease on more accounts
Than this. My colleagues eye me with strange looks;
Whisper apart! I heard them name—and more
Than once—Lord Sunbury.—Is he expected?
And if he is, my office near the king
Draws to a close. No matter!—I am still
The Earl of Byerdale! My brother's death,
My nephew's spurious birth, assure me that!
Whate'er hangs loose, hate can't unrobe me there.
I'll home! What keeps my coach? Will't never come?
I need its help! Impatience yearns for speed.

SCENE IV.—*A Chamber in LORD BYERDALE'S.**Enter the DUKE OF GAVESTON and LADY LAURA.**Lady Lau.* Why, father, come we hither?

Duke of Gav. They know best
 Who guided us. The ceremony here
 They judge, perhaps, with better grace perform'd
 Than in my prison-house. Their compact kept,
 The stipulation it was granted on,
 Although abandon'd as to hour and place,
 I shall fulfil, whate'er the hour and place,
 Much as my blood rebels!

Lady Lau. Came they not in
 Along with us?

Duke of Gav. Yes; but held back to speak.

Lady Lau. [*Aside.*] I saw no priest;
 I read no bridals in his looks—though love
 Was there—but such as finds its hopes a blank!
 Not once he took my hand, nor came so much
 As even within reach on't; when, had I seen
 One proffering step, I had met his half-way.
 I thought to be his wife to-morrow, and
 The day is farther off, if e'er to come,
 Or I mistake, when he shall call me bride!
 He comes!—Why comes he?—To forbid the banns!—
 I know it.—Can he find no other lips
 With theme so harsh to jar his lady's ear?

Enter WILTON and COLONEL GREEN, and LORD SUNBURY.

Duke of Gav. So far we have done your pleasure passively,
 Nor halt we yet. The stipulation
 Whereon our full enlargement was vouchsafed—
 Your union with my daughter—though foregone
 By your own choice, when by agreement due,
 Lies at your option still. This hand is yours
 When he, whose holy act of two makes one,
 Shall minister the nuptial ceremony.

Wilt. First let me bless this hand so proffer'd me!
 Bless for the life that it would give to me,
 Enrich'd by all that fondest heart of man
 E'er fancied in its wildest coveting,
 Of beauty, chastity, and goodness—all
 Enrich'd by holiest, most surpassing love!
 May plighting wait it from some happy palm
 Of purer blood than his who holds it now,
 Of clasp as honest—will as strong to cleave!—
 Else!—ere the priest for ever makes it his,
 May Heaven in its sweet mercy wrest it thence,
 And save the gift that else were cast away,
 As now 'tis torn from mine!

Lady Lau. Wilton!

Duke of Gav. My child!

Hold up! If, sir, my scruples sway this act,
This act, that gives them way, has vanquish'd them.
The Earl has kept his word, and the condition
Whereon 'twas pledged, and which I had withheld
With all my heart, with all my heart I yield.

Wilt. The Earl has kept his word, but was forestall'd.
To wed your daughter I was doubly bound,
And am so still, so you will have us wed;
Whereof the choice now solely rests with you,
Now fully freed from all contingencies.
My birth was yet a secret to me, which
I knew the Earl possess'd, and which to win,
I pledged an oath ne'er to divulge to you
The knowledge on't, while yet the trench remain'd
'Twixt you and liberty. The knowledge came,
And with it such abasement of my blood,
As, well I knew, no drop of yours would brook!
What course was I to take?—Time pacing on!
The hour almost within a stride!—your life
In jeopardy, as I believed!—your shame
The ransom, without option to refuse
Or grant!—my will beleaguer'd solemnly—
All that of endless din, and strife, and wrack
Is told of chaos, gather'd up and penn'd,
I felt within my soul!

Lady Lau. Is this man noble?

Is he not, father? If he be not, rend
All patents that make birth! Wilton, go on!
I see the end! you sought for other means
To set my father free?

Wilt. I did. A friend

Supplied me with them. 'Twas the king that oped
Your prison door. You are at liberty
Without the aid of barque or foreign land,
Without the gift of child or aught to me—
A man whose birth, what'er his truth may be,
Bearing, or reach, refuses him a name,
Drawing the breath he could not help but draw,
Unsanction'd by the priest!

Lady Lau. Why start you, father?

Duke of Gav. No priest the union of your parents bless'd?

Wilt. None, sir; what noble dame would wed with me?

Lady Lau. I—or I never wed!

Duke of Gav. Daughter!

Lady Lau. Where worth is,
Give honour, or nowhere! O, truth! lives shame
Where you abide? Manhood, go beg, if flaws
In your escutcheon point you out to scorn!
He who foregoes high fortune for a blur
That in his proper nature owns no germ,

She doubly should enforce her favours on!
 Confess it, father, noble as thou art!
 Thy blood it is that's speaking in thy child;
 To generosity be generous!
 Thy daughter's heart is wedded to his worth;
 Give him the thing that's second to her heart—
 The hand it nourishes!

Duke of Gav. Never!

Lady Lau. [After a pause, throwing herself on WILTON's neck.] O, Wilton!

[LORD BYERDALE enters in the back-ground.

Lord Byer. Tied!—Tied!—Fast tied! and now my triumph comes!

Solace for e'en disgrace! [*Comes forward.*] Joy, my lord duke!
 Joy of your son-in-law? I told your grace
 He was of noble stock, and told you true—
 My eldest brother's love-begotten son!
 His father's title and estates, 'tis true,
 Cleave not, by custom, to his parentage:
 But what o' that? Fowlers that miss the game,
 But yet come near to it, find comfort there!
 Your daughter had been married to an earl,
 Had but some dozen words been mumbled, ere
 Her husband's mother gave him to the light!

Wilt. My lord, we are not wed.

Lord Byer. How came you here?

'Tis false! Without the priest's due offices
 I took full heed no bolt should yield him way.

Wilt. The master of the prison drew the bolt.

Lord Byer. The governor?

Wilt. The governor of him.

The king's own order the good Duke enlarged,
 Enabled me to keep my oath, without
 Offence against my honour—snared by thee,
 Unnatural uncle! Thus of half its aim
 Thy malice balk'd, these are unscathed and free;
 Thy only victim thy own brother's son!

Lady Lau. Unscathed and free!—and thou a victim, Wilton!
 Lop off the part of a limb, and, if you will,
 Call what remains unscathed—there may be gain;
 But here is loss and loss, and nothing else!
 Unscathed! O Heaven!—and thou with galléd quick!
 Father, the word you gave, I ne'er gave back.
 It made me his by pledge—I stand so still!
 To fortune, honour, I had let him go,
 But not to woe and shame! *They* knot me to him!
 Wilton, I share thy voyage, come what will!
 I take the sea with thee whate'er thy boat,
 Howe'er the wind—where'er the shoal or rock,
 Yea, or the whirlpool, which a mouthful makes
 Of mariners and ship!—storms, strandings, wrecks,
 Engulfings, there am I, where you're afloat;

Be it but upon a plank--where you go down
I sink!

Col. Green. [*Tapping LORD BYERDALE on the shoulder.*] A
triumph worthy of a man,
To place a goodly youth in such a strait,
That virginhood, at dint of very ruth,
Casts chariness aside--pays heed to naught
Save love, at pity's promptings all resolved,
Whate'er the cost, to succour and to save him!

Lord Byer. Who is he that makes so bold?

Col. Green. One to bold things
Accustom'd; but allow'd ones, at the worst;
Not bann'd, at least, by Nature's common laws--
Whose life, at risk, he would not hesitate
To save at peril of another man's.
Yet--could not see his enemy take boat,
With certainty to founder when at sea,
Without dissuading him--yea, grappling him
With arms and heart--though foot to foot next day
Assured to stand against him--life 'gainst life!

Lord Byer. What are you?

Col. Green. One at home beneath a roof
As proud as even this!

Lord Byer. Wretch!

Col. Green. Give that name
To him who sold a falling monarch's cause
For hope to supersede an elder brother,
'Too stanch to heed the westing of the sun!
Or him who bore that brother's infant heir
Such love, he watch'd its fosterage with spies
Who roughly question'd, but persuadingly
Betray'd his orders to abstract the boy,
For what kind purpose, charity may guess;
Or him who for a second brother--bann'd!
Mulcted of scrip and friendship!--far and wide
Inquiries plied in hopes to find him--not
Alive, but dead--the man who made his breast,
'Thrice in one day, a shield to ward the blows
Had carried death to his!

Lord Byer. Whom speak'st thou of?

Col. Green. Of thee--but make amends within thy power,
By one benignant, all-absolving act,
Resigning title and estates to him
Should be thy brother's heir!

Lord Byer. To Wilton Brown!
'That boy without a name--save such a one
As any dog may challenge--what it pleases
The fancy of the owner give to him--

Col. Green. [*Interposing.*] Silence, sir!

Lord Byer. Sir!--You know my title--

Col. Green. Yes;
And give it you.

Lord Byer. Sir!

Col. Green. Silence, sir, again!

Lord Byer. Who art thou, villain, that accost'st me thus?

Col. Green. No less a villain than your second brother!

Lord Byer. A traitor!—an attainted traitor! come
To wrest my rights from me! Wretch!—I attach you
In virtue of my office!

Lord Sun. That is gone.

Lord Byer. Lord Sunbury!—Return'd from France!

Lord Sun. In time

To thank your lordship for your patronage
Of this, his noble ward! farther, relieve you
Of the charge of office, whereto bear I here
His Majesty's commands. Your power is gone!

Col. Green. And, were it not, its virtue here were void,
By supersedence of the royal grace;
There is the king's free pardon! Farther; there,
Restoral of my proper patrimony,
Engulf'd, with the rest, by thy rapacity!
And, farther, still, to make that grace complete,
Here recognition of your nephew's rights,
As your first brother's son!

Lord Byer. There, 'twixt the king
And me the laws will stand! No spurious son
Can hold succession, such as he allows.

Col. Green. Who said a spurious son? I mean a son
In lawful wedlock born!

Lord Byer. Where is he?

Col. Green. There,
Bless'd in the bride his worth alone has won!
His worth, which, to the crowning trial put,
Has shown itself the paragon of proof!

Lord Byer. We must have documents for this.

Col. Green. You shall!

Such as the witness'd vouchers of his birth—
O' the nuptials of his parents—fully proved;
Of the grounds for their concealment full set forth—
Whereof some portion is referr'd to you—
Your brother's will, moreover, duly seal'd,
And fixing the succession on his child.

Lord Byer. May!—

Col. Green. Imprecations stick to guilty heads,
But from the innocent fall harmless off,
So do not utter them.

Lord Byer. What's in my heart
You can't prevent its uttering to itself.

Take your good fortune—Wear it—as I wish! [*Rushes out.*]

Lord Sun. Wilton, I give you joy!

Wilt. My benefactor,

That foster'd me in boyhood, welcome back!

Duke. [*Stepping between WILTON and LAURA.*] Wilton, I
know I must not ask your pardon.

All the atonement I can make, I do ;
And take it as thou wilt.

[*Joins their hands.*]

Wilt. With reverence,
With honour, gratitude, and endless love !

Sher. [*Rushing in.*] I cannot be away, howe'er unbidden !

O, credit me for all a son should feel ;

I own to a tear, but yet it is not one

That falls at your good fortune. That I loved you.

You know—that I withheld the confidence

Which should in couples ever go with love,

Our honest uncle bear the blame, who likes

To see the way clear, ere he takes the road.

I am not one that will not venture forth

Long as a cloud hangs out a threat of rain ;

He is, and I was bound to do his will.

The king hath made the perfect clearing up !

'Tis true I am a loser ; but, indeed,

One that o'erlooks his losses—in your gains.

Wilt. Sherbrooke, we'll have one fortune as one heart !

Why, all goes well.

Lady Lau. All ?

Col. Green. All, if these our friends

Cry us Good speed, and parting bear no grudge :

Kind looks outstrip kind tongues. We part—good friends.

THE END.

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